ASIAN HISTORY

Farish A. Noor

The Discursive Construction of Southeast Asia in 19th Century Colonial-Capitalist Discourse

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To Amy,
Who helped me look at the world anew

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A Note on the Language, Spelling and Pagination of Quotations

I have left all quotations 'as is', with no attempt at altering the spelling of words in keeping with the standardised spelling of English as it is used and written today. I have also left all quotes uncorrected, though in cases where errors are to be found these have been highlighted.

I have quoted directly from the earliest editions of the works that are referred to in the following chapters, and it has to be noted that in some cases the pagination in subsequent editions, including contemporary editions, may be different.

1 Introduction

Booking Southeast Asia: The History of an Idea

> Words in their primacy or immediate signification, stand for nothing, but the ideas in the mind of him who uses them. (3.2.ii)
> – John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689)

1.a A Book about Books, and Where to Find Southeast Asia

> When we start to ascertain the thingness of a thing, we are immediately helpless in spite of our well-ordered question. *Where* should we grasp the *thing*? And besides, we nowhere find 'the thing', but only particular things.[1]
> – Martin Heidegger, 'The Everyday and Scientific Experiences of the Thing: The Question Concerning Their Truth'

This is a book about books; and specifically about the books that were written on the subject of Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century.

Before proceeding any further, I would like to make it clear that this is *not* a book about the historical development of the region that is commonly known as 'Southeast Asia' today: Scores of erudite scholars have already done sterling work in that regard, and names like Steinberg, Roff, Chandler and Taylor come to mind.[2] Nor am I disputing the fact that the peoples of that region were already in constant contact with each other, and had formed networks of commercial and cultural exchange between themselves long before the term 'Southeast Asia' had been coined – a fact well researched and documented by Anthony Reid[3] and K.N. Chaudhuri[4] in particular.

Rather, I propose to look at how the *idea* of Southeast Asia – long before the term was current – was arrived at, developed and put to instrumental use by a succession of scholars, adventurers and merchants from 1800 to the end of the nineteenth century, focusing primarily on the writers who were

1 Heidegger, 'The Everyday and Scientific Experience of the Thing', 11.

2 See, for example, the contributors to Steinberg, *In Search of Southeast Asia*, the first edition of which came out in 1971.

3 See Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2*, as well as his *Charting the Shape of Early Modern Southeast Asia*.

4 Chaudhuri, *Asia before Europe*.

themselves part of the colonial enterprise and the products of empire. It is thus a book about the *idea* of the place and the worldviews of those who had imagined a region that lay before them, ripe for colonisation and conquest. In its pace and progression I propose to take tiny Hobbit-steps rather than emulate the stride of giants, and the claims that I shall make are modest in nature, though not, I believe, entirely inconsequential.

Since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*,[5] much has been written about the colonial era in Asia and Africa, and many of us are familiar with the arguments that have been levelled against the colonial enterprise and how it distorted the socio-cultural-economic realities of those who came under its totalising power. However it has become a commonplace, even glib, rebuke against the colonisers of the past to state that they were instrumental in creating the order of knowledge and power that ultimately divided the world into neatly compartmentalised colonies and regions that would later become the nation-states that we know today. The critique of the colonial enterprise often comes in the form of a blanket dismissal of its order of knowledge as falsifying and agenda-driven; and to conclude that all of those who were part of that enterprise were the products and perpetuators of its skewed logic. This book aims to delve deeper into that body of writing that emerged in the nineteenth century, and it hopes to show that even as colonial-capitalism's order of knowledge and power was being built, there was hardly a grand singular plan, or universal consensus, among the builders of that columbarium of epistemic power. Rather, via a close reading of some of the key authors who helped to lay down the foundations for what would eventually be called 'Southeast Asia', I hope to show that many different, and at times competing and mutually exclusive, agendas were at work.

This work hopes to fill a gap – sometimes overlooked, perhaps due to thinness of the crack in the fundament – that lies in Southeast Asian studies today. For while Southeast Asia undoubtedly exists, little attention has been given to the *genesis* of the idea and its *constructed, invented* nature. An immediate, intuitive reply to the question 'Where is Southeast Asia?' may occasion a hurried rush to the nearest map-cupboard (assuming that one has a cupboard full of maps at home), taking out a map and pointing to a particular region and saying, with an air of self-satisfaction: 'There it is. *There* is Southeast Asia.' Today however, any scholar who has come under the spell of postmodern critical theory and discourse analysis will know that such an intuitive answer cannot be correct – which may account for

5 Said, *Orientalism*.

why such scholars are rarely invited to the homes of others to rummage through their map collections. For such a reply assumes that the region of Southeast Asia already exists as a thing-in-itself, fully self-constituted and self-evidently *is*. This book will chart the evolution of the *idea* of Southeast Asia, and it takes off from the premise that spaces are never already pre-constituted spaces and places are never already preconstituted places, but are rather discursive inventions that have to be put together, rationalised, explained and framed – all of which happen to take place in a moment that is historical and determined by a host of variables that locate such ideas not only in spaces/places, but also in history.

The historical framework within which I shall be working will be the nineteenth century, roughly between 1800 to the 1900s, which marks the culmination of a longer and more complicated process where Asia came to be known and was rendered knowable thanks to a host of epistemologies and technologies that developed in tandem with the project of empire. By focusing on this particular period I am not discounting the earlier moments of contact between the West and Asia, or diminishing the worth of the scholarship on Asia that was undertaken by earlier generations of scholars and explorers. On the contrary, I hope to show that there was a continuity in the development of the ideas of 'Asia' and 'Southeast Asia' from the initial stages of contact between West and East, and that the writers and scholars of the nineteenth century were merely adding more features to an already overdetermined economy of ideas whose foundational premises were laid centuries before.

This however presents us with the first problem that we encounter as we set off on this journey of historical recounting: I have chosen to focus on the nineteenth century for the simple reason that only by honing my focus thus can I render the vast body of literature manageable. As Richards has noted, empire's dominion over land, sea and knowledge produced a discursive terrain that was in the end ungovernable by virtue of its expanse and complexity, and there is no 'point of entry' into this landscape of ideas that would lead us to a final and comprehensive encompassing of its totality.[6] The choice of time frame, authors, colonial regimes and colonised territories that I look at in this work was entirely mine, and was made with the knowledge – and admission – that this has to be an effort that is limited by the finitude of space and the constraints of the book. It is for this reason that the reader will see that apart from the time frame that I have set for myself, I have also chosen to look at colonial systems and orders of

6 Richards, *The Imperial Archive*.

knowledge-power that prevailed in the settings of the Straits Settlements, British Malaya, British Burma and the Dutch East Indies in particular, with the few asides and references to the colonial experience of French Indochina and Spanish Philippines that I could muster.

The works that are cited in the subsequent chapters are the result of the labour of those who worked mainly for the British East India Company, or who were allied to its interests and happy to help it in its way. I have chosen these works in particular as I wish to demonstrate that their authors were part of the same colonial-capitalist enterprise, and who belonged to a discursive community that was held together not only by the same contractual bonds that bound them to the company they served, but also by a common scholarly tradition, world of letters and Anglocentric worldview – which at times pit them against other European competitors and adversaries.

Confining ourselves to the nineteenth century does not, however, mean that our findings are likely to be simpler or more homogenous. Indeed, as I hope to show in the following chapters, the nineteenth century was a time when the very idea of Southeast Asia itself was amorphous and the boundaries of Southeast Asia – both epistemic and geographic – were inchoate. The European scholars and colonial functionaries who wrote about the constituent parts of the region were equally unclear about where they were and where they wished to locate the places and subjects of their interest, and did not have in mind a ready-made fully constituted Southeast Asia to opine about. Southeast Asia's constructed and artificial character becomes doubly apparent when we revisit these writings, and read them closely.

The implications of this – that Southeast Asia was *never really discovered, but rather discursively constructed* – may have consequences that extend beyond the signifier itself, and may also shape and inform other debates that take place in related domains such as Southeast Asian studies, international relations, and the nation-building process. (And at times accounts for the 'fundamental anxiety' of Southeast Asian scholars, as noted by Pepinsky recently.[7]) For today there remains the tendency to take Southeast Asia as a given, or to even backdate the history of the concept before the signifier came into common usage.[8] A variant of this mistake can be found in the manner that the official national histories of the countries of the region

7 Pepinsky, 'How Did Southeast Asia Become a Social Fact?'

8 The concept of Southeast Asia is not the only idea that has been appropriated thus: Authors like Coedès have also rendered complex belief systems like Hinduism as monolithic in the manner in which they have written about the 'Hinduised states' of Southeast Asia in the past, as in his work *Les états hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonesie* (Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*).

tend to begin with the nation-state as the pregiven starting point, and then back-date the history of 'Indonesia' or 'Malaysia' or 'Vietnam' to a past when these nation-states did not exist in the form they do today.[9]

Another fact that is sometimes forgotten in writings about Southeast Asia is that up to the twentieth century there was hardly a consensus as to which of the nation-states of Asia should be regarded as part of the region: When the World Health Organization (WHO) was set up, the interim committee that was called to cobble together the WHO suggested that Afghanistan, India and Sri Lanka be added to the Southeast Asian grouping as well. Indonesia, however, was then seen as part of the Western Pacific region, alongside Papua New Guinea. Later in 1953 when Nepal became a member of WHO it was also added to the category of Southeast Asia, to be followed by Bangladesh, Bhutan and even South Korea. Until today, the WHO's definition of what constitutes Southeast Asia and which countries are considered Southeast Asian flies in the face of everyday understandings of the term[10] – proof, if any was needed, that naming and placing have less to do with geography and more with human subjectivity and political agendas.

Kratoska, Nordholt and Raben's *Locating Southeast Asia: Geographies of Knowledge and Politics of Space* is a work that has looked at the complexity of this process of inventing and locating the region; and the great value of their work lies in how it brought together a plethora of different perspectives – both Southeast Asian and non-Southeast Asian – to remind us that such an abstract construct can only have a multiplicity of meanings for the infinite number of subjects who view it.[11] Scholars like Carey, Chaudhuri, Reid and Andaya[12] have done extensive work that look at how the peoples of the region had evolved a political-cultural ecology of their own, which can be backdated to the period long before colonial intervention.

Yet notwithstanding its haphazard and contingent genesis, today Southeast Asia exists and is made up of postcolonial nation-states that are themselves the direct result of the colonial encounter. The work of K.M.

9 Noor, 'How Indonesia Sees ASEAN and the World'.

10 Among the countries that are defined as Southeast Asian by the World Health Organization are Thailand (joined in September 1947), India (July1948), Sri Lanka (July 1948), Burma (July 1948), Indonesia (May 1950), Nepal (September 1953), Maldives (November 1965), Bangladesh (May 1972), People's Republic of Korea (May 1973), Bhutan (March 1982), and East Timor (September 2002) (World Health Organization, 'History of the WHO South-East Asia Region').

11 Kratoska, Nordholt and Raben, *Locating Southeast Asia*.

12 Carey, *The Cultural Ecology of Nineteenth Century Java*; Chaudhuri, *Asia before Europe*; Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680: Vol. I* and *Vol. II*; and Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree*.

Pannikkar and the Institute of Pacific Relations is often cited as the first instances of the signifier 'Southeast Asia' coming into use, situating its birth at the middle of the twentieth century[13] – though later in this work I shall argue that there are even earlier instances of the use of the signifier 'Southeast Asia' that date to the late nineteenth century. The deep imprint of the colonial era is seen everywhere, from the artificial borders that were imposed on the region by the European powers, according to the calculations of their own geostrategic interests and as a result of the rivalry between them from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries. And the lasting impression of colonial rule and epistemology is seen and felt in the governmentality of the elites of the present-day Southeast Asian states themselves, who have internalised the logic of ethnic-cultural difference, territoriality, national interest and the notion of what constitutes – ideationally and essentially – the singular core identity of these nations, regardless of the fact that almost all of the polities of present-day Southeast Asia were, and remain, plural, heterodox and complex. The contradictions of the colonial era remain as the contradictions of the postcolonial age, and in many of the states of Southeast Asia today the challenge of full representation (in national politics, history books, official national narratives) and political access and empowerment remain real concerns for those communities that were alienated or marginalised during the colonial era as they remain today.[14]

13 Fifield has noted that in 'the course of the Second World War Southeast Asia was increasingly perceived as a region with common military and political denominators. The establishment of the Southeast Asia Command by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill under the command of Lord Louis Mountbatten at the first Quebec Conference in August 1943 is normally cited as seminal. In terms of perspective, however, the work of the Institute of Pacific Relations and the research of K.M. Pannikkar as well as the political perceptions of certain government officials in Washington and elsewhere before the Quebec Conference cannot be forgotten either. (Pannikar used the term in the title of his book *The Future of Southeast Asia* published in 1943.) The First and Second Indochinese Wars further advanced the concept of Southeast Asia. During the first war from 1946 to 1954 the domino premise of multiple repercussions to the region if Indochina went Communist was articulated. In the second war of 1965 to 1975 Indochina was not only equated with the rest of the region but "Southeast Asia" became a household expression' (Fifield, 'Southeast Asian Studies').

14 In many of the countries of the ASEAN region there remain many ethnic-religious-linguistic communities which struggle for full representation at the national level. Indonesia, during the era of President Suharto, was seen as a Javanese-dominated republic where other ethnic and linguistic groups were relegated to secondary roles in power and economics, while Thailand remains dominated by ethnic Thais (so that other ethnic and linguistic communities are seldom fully represented in the mainstream media). The Federation of Malaysia continues to experience disquiet from other ethnic-religious-linguistic communities who reside in the East Malaysian

Much work has already been done on and about the postcolonial nation-state in Southeast Asia, by scholars who have studiously accounted for the lingering traces of colonial governmentality in the society and politics of the region: From Alatas' work on the perpetuation of stereotypes of the lazy native among postcolonial elites and technocrats[15]; to Hirschman's study of racial difference in colonial and postcolonial Southeast Asian societies[16]; to Anderson's work on the language of power in modern day Southeast Asia[17]; to Kessler's study of archaism and modernity in the region's contemporary political culture.[18] Others like Carey[19]and Milner[20] have looked at how the communities of the region have themselves addressed the changing realities of the nineteenth century from their own perspective, as they grappled with the colonial order of power and knowledge. There have also been many comprehensive works on Southeast Asia's history, among the best known being Steinberg's *In Search of Southeast Asia* (1985), which has become a staple in many courses on Southeast Asian History. Yet it has to be noted that some of the works that have touched upon the massive impact of colonial scholarship on the development of the idea of Southeast Asia have not gone into greater detail into the *contents* of the works themselves; leaving the reader with the impression that the works of the nineteenth century European colonial functionaries were somehow homogenous in form and content – which they were not.

That gap is precisely what this work aims to fill – albeit by focusing closely upon a selection of works that were produced mainly by the functionaries of the British East India Company in particular. And as I have stated at the beginning, this is fundamentally a book about books, and its focus will be on how the authors of those books on Southeast Asia imagined and represented the various parts of the region in terms that were in keeping with the logic of racialised colonial-capitalism of the nineteenth century. In the chapters that follow I hope to show – through a close and detailed reading of the

states of Sarawak and Sabah and who feel that their ethnic and linguistic identities have not been given the same status as that of the Malay community that predominates in the Malaysian Peninsula. Tangau, for instance, has argued that for the native *Pasokmomogun* (indigenous) Kadazandusun and Murut communities of Sabah, there exists a different notion of a 'nation of intent', where the agrarian-based Kadazandusun and Murut communities feel that they have lost out in the race for economic development (Tangau, 'Malaysia's Vision 2020 Development Plan').

15 Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*.

16 Hirshman, 'The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya'.

17 Anderson, *Language and Power*.

18 Kessler, 'Archaism and Modernity in Contemporary Malay Political Culture'.

19 Carey, *The British in Java*.

20 Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*.

works on Southeast Asia that were written from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth – how the idea of Southeast Asia slowly came about; and to highlight the many themes, narrative devices and different discursive strategies that went into the development of the idea.

No balm of Gilead is being offered here; and it is certainly not my intention to suggest that an awareness and appreciation of the constructed nature of a region's identity can solve its political, socio-economic or geostrategic problems and challenges. But it is, in my opinion, still important for us to recognise how a regional identity came to be, and what were the underpinnings of such an enterprise – situated as they were at the heart of the colonial-capitalist project of empire.

Before proceeding any further I would like to take this opportunity to switch to a more personal register.

This has been the work of an academic who also happens to be a collector of antiquarian books. Many of the works quoted in this book are from my own personal collection of books, maps, prints and letters related to Southeast Asia, a collection that was started during my student days at the University of Sussex in the mid-1980s. That most the books cited here happen to be the works of writers who served the East India Company is no accident: for the collection I put together was meant to serve as a personal database for subsequent research into Western colonialism in Asia and the courses I taught on the British Empire in Southeast Asia. As such, the work also traces my career as a do-it-yourself amateur collector who had to indulge his pastime on the meagre budget of a student, and later an equally skint academic.

Thanks are due to those who were supportive of my work all these years – Christele Dedebant, Martin van Bruinessen, Saskia Gieling, Gudrun Kramer, Ulrike Freitag, Dietrich Reetz, Eddin Khoo, Eric Germain and Romain Bertrand; fellow journeymen and women along my academic travels; and to my antiquarian book-dealer chums whose support has been crucial in my vocation as both an academic and collector: Pablo Butcher, Fred Noel Brookes, Sandra Antunes and Scott Schilb. In particular I would like to thank Henry Brownrigg, who has been both a companion and fellow-collector, and an abiding friend for decades.

Research and fieldwork for this book was done while teaching my courses on Southeast Asian History, Society and Politics as well as Discourse Analysis at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University Singapore. I am exceedingly thankful to the Dean of RSIS and my colleagues for the opportunities that I was given, to travel around the region doing field research, and the discussions we have had

on the inter-related subjects of Southeast Asian history, diplomacy, trade and identity-formation. In particular I would like to thank Ong Keng Yong, Executive Chairman of RSIS; Joseph Liow, Dean of RSIS; and Barry Desker, former Dean of RSIS, for their support all these years.

Among my colleagues thanks are due to Kevin Tan, whose interest in the complex history of the region is equal to my own; and to Peter Carey and Martin van Bruinessen, whose work on Java has been a tremendous inspiration to me. My gratitude also extends to Chris Hale, with whom I have had the pleasure of working with on a number of documentary projects, and David Henkel of the Asian Civilisations Museum, with whom many a portion of sausages and chips were chewed over endless rounds of discussion on the genesis of Southeast Asia.

And finally I would also like to register my gratitude to the exceptional students who I have had the pleasure to teach and work with at RSIS, some of whom have truly been a boon to this tired academic, and whose enthusiasm for critical research and writing helped me stay focused on the task at hand. Much of the work contained in this modest book was initially conceived in the classes and seminars we had together, and their questions and critical input have been significant and appreciated. Thanks to Akanksha Mehta, Oleg Korovin, Randy Wirasta Nadyatama, Sean Galloway, Annie Yong, Adri Wanto, Ram Ganesh Kamatham, Vincent Mack, Jesse Caemmerer, Anais Prudent, Matthias Wong Meng Yan and all my other students – in Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia – whose interest in learning more about Southeast Asia affirmed my own belief that this is a region that is complex, rich and worth studying. And on that note, we can now begin our search for that elusive thing called *Southeast Asia*.

Farish A. Noor
RSIS, NTU
February 2016

2 Booking Southeast Asia: And So It Begins, with a Nightmare

2.a Thomas de Quincey and the Malay from an Antique Land

> The mere antiquity of Asiatic things, of their institutions, histories, above all their mythologies – is so impressive that to me the vast age of the race and name overpowers the sense of youth in the individual.[1]
>
> – Thomas de Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821)

Sometime in the year 1816, the essayist Thomas de Quincey found himself travelling across the northern English countryside in a vain attempt to kick his drug habit, a self-induced malady that had grown increasingly debilitating over the past decade.[2]

During this sojourn in the country, de Quincey tried to free himself from his addiction to laudanum that had gripped him since he began taking the drug in 1804, initially for medicinal purposes, but later for recreational ones. His stay in the country proved to be taxing, as by then he had been chasing the dragon for too long and opium's grip on him was fast and strong. The result of this mortal combat against his wasting addiction proved to be more lasting, and it came in the form of his most famous work, *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* that was published anonymously in 1821 in the *London Magazine* and was released in book form in 1822.

Though critics of the book were severe on its author as well as its contents, it ought to be noted that the *Confessions* of de Quincey was, and remains, an extraordinary piece of writing – no mere junkie was the man. Written as western Europe was slowly recovering from the trauma of the Napoleonic Wars, there was a timeliness to de Quincey's writing as well, for it spoke to a generation of jaded men who lived through the clash of empires and who had witnessed the transition from revolution to terror to dictatorship. Notwithstanding the repetitive bouts of extreme depression that he suffered, and the tendency for his pen to wander into the realm of the surreal,

1 De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*.

2 The episode that I am about to relate does not bear a precise date in de Quincey's work, but on page 90 of the *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* he invites the reader to 'walk three years more' from the year 1813.

in his *Confessions* de Quincey recorded an encounter that would otherwise be consigned to the domain of the extraordinary and out-of-this-world had it not been true: It took place in one of the inns that he had holed up in, in the Lake District of northern England, and he recorded the event thus: 'One day a Malay knocked on my door. What business could a Malay have to transact among the recesses of the English mountains was not my business to conjecture, but possibly he was on the road to Seaport, some forty miles distant.'[3]

De Quincey does not name this mysterious Malay from nowhere, but he noted that the occupants of the inn were terrified by the fact that this foreigner had walked into the place unannounced. Dumfounded, the servant girl – 'who had never seen an Asiatic before'[4] – did not know what to do, for the Malay spoke no English, and presumably none of the lodgers spoke Malay either.[5] With everyone in a state of panic, it was left to de Quincey to break the ice.

De Quincey admitted that his knowledge of Asiatic languages was limited to the Arabic word for barley and the Turkish word for opium, which was not much help under the circumstances; but he had at least the common sense to realize that the man before him was a human being with ordinary wants and needs. He saw to it that the Malay was fed and given a place to sleep, though his writing does not dwell on whether the other inhabitants of the inn could sleep at all that night. The next day the Malay made it clear that he was about to leave, and before he set off de Quincey offered him a gift in the form of a ball of opium, which he recounted:

> I was struck by some little consternation when I saw him (the Malay) suddenly raise his hand to his mouth, bolt the whole (ball of opium), divided into three pieces, in one mouthful. The quantity was enough to kill some half-dozen dragoons, together with their horses, supposing neither bipeds nor quadrupeds were trained opium-eaters. I felt some alarm for the poor fellow, but what could be done? I had given him the opium in pure compassion for his solitary life, since, if he had travelled all the way from London, it must have been three weeks since he could have exchanges a thought with any other human being… The mischief, if any, was done. He took his leave and for some days I was anxious; but, as I never heard of any Malay being found dead on the part of the slender

3 Ibid., 92.
4 Ibid., 92.
5 Ibid., 93.

> road between Grasmere and Whitehaven, I became satisfied that he was familiar with opium.[6]

Malays in the early nineteenth century were hardy fellows, obviously; but they also had the capacity to invade the dreams of others, as it turned out.

De Quincey's narrative plods on at its own inebriated pace, and in the days to come he was set upon by more bouts of anxiety and depression. The stage was set for his next encounter with the Malay from nowhere, who revisited him in the dead of night as he was tormented by images of heaven and hell. Amidst scenes in his mind that seem to have been inspired by Blake, de Quincey encountered the Malay who brought with him the might of all of Asia:

> This Malay, partly from the picturesque exhibition he assisted to frame, partly from the anxiety I connected with him image for some days, fastened afterwards upon my fancy and that upon my dreams, bringing with him other Malays more worse than himself who ran am-muck at me, and led me to a world of nocturnal troubles… That Malay has been a fearful enemy for months. Every night, through his means, I have been transported into Asiatic scenery… Southern Asia, in general, is the seat of awful dreams and associations. As the cradle of the human race, if on no other ground, it would have a dim, reverential feeling about it. The mere antiquity of Asiatic things, of their institutions, histories, above all their mythologies – is so impressive that to me the vast age of the race and name overpowers the sense of youth in the individual. Man is a weed in those regions… *The vast empires, also into which the peoples of Asia have been cast, give a further sublimity to the feelings with Oriental names and images.* (Emphasis mine)[7]

Crushed by the weight of Asia, the Englishman stands as 'a weed in those regions'. Transported to the 'cradle of the human race', de Quincey cowers like a frightened baby, terrified yet reverential of what he saw in his nightmare: an *idea* – of Asia – that was simply, and literally, overpowering. That his fear was real is evident in de Quincey's text, but what is interesting is how this fear that invaded his sleep came completely furnished with stock images, tropes and metaphors that were bound together in the form of a comprehensible narrative of Asia and Asiatic majesty. De Quincey

6 Ibid., 94.
7 Ibid., 95.

writes of the landscapes and temples, the demonic sights and images that assaulted his already-fragile sensibilities nightly, but the reader is left with the lingering question of how these images could have come to him, as a coherent whole?

By his own account, de Quincey's short encounter with the mysterious Malay gives us no indication of how that singular event could have triggered the torrent of images that followed; particularly when we note that hardly a word was shared between the two of them. De Quincey was terrified and overwhelmed by the idea of an Asia *he had never visited*, and there was no way that the mysterious Malay could have surreptitiously slipped a handful of thoughts during their fleeting exchange. (Even if thoughts were easy to slip.) If de Quincey was tormented by the overpowering *idea* of Asia, then the cause of that vexation had to come from some place closer: *home*.

Thomas de Quincey, the inveterate university drop-out and itinerant essayist, lived in an England that was, by then, poised to become the centre of an empire bigger than any other in the world. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars Britain possessed an empire larger than that of France. Being a man of letters himself, who had ties to the writing and publishing industry, de Quincey must have been familiar with the writings on Asia that were in circulation by then: Theodorus de Bry's works were found across Europe from 1601[8]; Walter Raleigh's from 1614[9]; Fernão Mendes Pinto's from 1628[10]; Johan Nieuhof's work on the East Indies had been translated into English and published in 1704[11]; Wouter Schouten's from 1708[12]; John Barrow's *Discoveries* had been compiled and sold since 1766[13]; William Fordyce Mavor's own *Voyages* from 1796.[14] William Marsden's great work on Sumatra was around since 1783,[15] and it found favour among many, including the Jacobins of revolutionary France who published a second edition of it in 1794.[16] By the time that the *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* hit the printing presses in 1821, Stamford Raffles' *The History of Java* (1817) was already in circulation, as well as John Crawfurd's *A History of the Indian Archipelago* (1820).

8 De Bry and Israel, *Icones Sive Expressae et Artifitiosae*.
9 Raleigh, *The Historie of the World*.
10 Pinto, *Les Voyages aventureux de Fernand Mendez Pinto*.
11 Nieuhof, *Voyages and Travels into Brasil*.
12 Schouten, *Voiage de Gautier Schouten aux Indes Orientales*.
13 Barrow, *Abrégé chronologique*.
14 Mavor, *A Historical Account of the Most Celebrated Voyages*.
15 Marsden, *The History of Sumatra* (1783).
16 Marsden, *Histoire de Sumatra*.

In such a setting ideas, prejudices, opinions and images of Asia abounded. That de Quincey's nightmare of Asia was accompanied by vivid images of tropical landscapes, towering temples and Malays running 'am-muck' was hardly surprising, for Malays had been running amok on the pages of so many writers before him. The introduction of lithography and chromolithography meant that the penned accounts of writers like Johannes Boemus (1520), Sebastian Munster (1598), Giovanni Maffei (1589) and Fernão Mendes Pinto (1628) could be accompanied by illustrations that were even more corporeal and arresting, and later rendered in full colour as well; though without the trigger warning: 'not to be read by opium addicts with shaky nerves'. And if there were any culprits who could be blamed for the nightmares that de Quincey suffered, it would be the European writers who conceived of the idea of Asia itself, beginning with one of the very first who came up with the name of the place that pained him so, Johannes Boemus.

In 1520, Johannes Boemus published his *Omnium Gentium Mores, Leges et Ritus,* which is regarded as the first work of ethnography produced in the Western world.[17] Translated into other major European languages and republished throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the work was considered an authoritative account of societies beyond Europe at the time. Asia appears in the second part of the work, and from the outset is described in terms monumental:

> Asie, the seconde part of the thre wherin to we haue said that the whole erth is diuided: tooke name as some hold opinion, of the doughter of Oceanus, and Tethis, named Asia, the wife of Iaphetus, and the mother of Prometheus. Or as other affirme, of Asius, the sonne of Maneye the Lidian. And it stretcheth it self from the South, bowtyng25 by the Easte into the Northe: hauyng on the West parte the two flouddes, Nilus and Tanais, and the whole Sea Euxinum, and parte of the middle earth sea. Vpon the other thre quarters, it is lysted in with the Occean, whiche where he cometh by Easte Asie, is called Eous (as ye would saie toward the dawnyng) by the South, Indicus (of the countrie named India) and aftre the name of the stoure Scithiane, vpon the northe Scythicus. The greate mounteine Taurus ronnyng East and West, and in a maner equally

17 So influential was Boemus' work that it was translated into many European languages. In 1555 William Waterman translated the work and had it published under the title *The Fardle of Facions*, and in 1611 Edward Aston issued a second version under the title *The Manners, Lawes and Customs of All Nations.*

> partyng the lande in twaine: leaueth one parte on the Northe side, called by the Grekes the outer Asie: and another on the South, named the inner Asie.[18]

Having advanced from classical Hellenic sources, Boemus' account of Asia extended it beyond the limits that had been set by Herodotus, for whom Asia had stopped at Anatolia and the Persian empire. Boemus lists amongst Asia's peoples the Medeans, Parthians, Persians, Scythians, Tartars and Indians. Of the Indians 'of Ynde', he claims that there lived among them some tribes where the people 'lacke neckes, and haue their eyes in their shoulders' and others with 'dogges heades'[19] – descriptions that would later be taken up and repeated in the writings and engravings of Sebastian Munster, whom Boemus obviously influenced and inspired. Munster's *Geographia* (1540) and *Cosmographia* (1544) would borrow many of the themes of Boemus' work, and the maps that accompany his writings were full of images of Asians of all sorts, including the famous dog-headed Asiatics and headless men whose faces were found on their chests instead.

Despite the somewhat capricious account of Asia and Asians that are to be found in the writings of Boemus and Munster, it ought to be noted that by the early to mid-sixteenth century such writers were not merely spinning fantastical ideas and conjuring images out of nothing: for Europe was beginning to encounter an Asia that was real and vast thanks to the first eastward voyages being attempted by navigators like Ferdinand Magellan, whose exploits in the East were in turn recorded for posterity by wayfaring writers like Antonio Pigafetta.[20] Bracciolini and Varthema[21] had also ventured to Asia and returned, bringing with them wondrous accounts of another world that seemed larger, greater and richer than anything that could be found in Europe then. If the reader today is bemused by the depictions of Asians that are found in the work of Boemus and Munster, then he should consider

18 Boemus, *The Fardle of Facions*.

19 Ibid.

20 Pigafetta, *Magellan's Voyage around the World* and Pigafetta, *Magellan's Voyage*. Antonio Pigafetta was a young Italian who had volunteered for Magellan's expedition. He was not trained as a professional seaman, nor was he a scholar of any kind. Of some noble descent, Pigafetta claimed Venetian citizenship though the details of his family history remain obscure. He was also a knight of the Order of Rhodes when he joined the Papal commission to Spain in 1518, and his narrative was addressed to the Grand Master of the Order of the Knights of Rhodes. This in fact meant that he was a free subject whose role and presence as a member of the fleet was not bound by the laws and dictates of the Kingdom of Spain. This also meant that he was spared the many duties of the Spanish sailors and was thus free to write his journal throughout the trip.

21 Bracciolini, *India Recognita*, and De Varthema, *The Itinerary of Ludovico de Varthema*.

the reaction of European readers of the time to the accounts published by travellers like Pigafetta, whose writing on the peoples and customs of the East Indies did not shy away from the subject of sexuality, and even dwelled on the size, shape and form of penises that he encountered there.[22]

2.b From Boemus to Theodorus de Bry and Sir Walter Raleigh: The East Indies in the Kingdom of God

> The Lord God planted a garden, Eastwards, in Eden, and there he put the Man whom he made.[23]
>
> – Walter Raleigh, *The Historie of the World* (1614

Asian penises were probably not Sir Walter Raleigh's cup of tea, and his account of Asia, found in his mammoth work *The Historie of the World*

22 Pigafetta's narrative is full of details of the clothes, manners, customs and environs of the peoples he meets in Asia. He related the fact that almost all of the men and women he encountered on the islands in the Indies walked about naked, and he admits to the fact that some of the young women he is introduced to on some of the islands were exceedingly attractive. He also relates some of the difficulties that he and his European crew members faced in the course of these preliminary encounters, for there were often misunderstandings on both sides: On the island of Ternate, for instance, where 'the men were very jealous of their wives', Pigafetta was asked to land ashore with his pants down for the local 'women thought we always had our members in readiness' (Pigafetta, Antonio Pigafetta, Megellan's Voyage. Folio Society Press, London, 1975, p. 126. Nowhere in his narrative, however, does Pigafetta resort to the register of the exotic or bizarre. Unlike some of the more sensationalist accounts of Asia and Asian customs that would drip from the pages of many an Orientalist fiction centuries later, he maintains an air of objective detachment in his narrative and does not distort his subjects or cast them in a lurid aspect – despite his own stern Christian morals as a knight of the Order of Rhodes. But even his objective nature could not prevent Pigafetta from recounting to the Grand Master the 'shameful nature of the members [penises] of the men' of the island of Zzubu (Subu) in some detail. After issuing the standard set of denials and warnings, he recounts the sexual behaviour of the islanders thus: 'Those people go naked, wearing only a piece of cloth made of palm around their shameful parts. They have as many wives as they wish, but there is always a chief one… The males, both large and small, have the heads of their members pierced from one side to another, with a pin of gold or tin the size of a goose feather; and at the end of this pin have a star-shaped decoration like a button, and others, one like the head of a cart-nail' (p. 90). Pigafetta scarcely conceals his own curiosity to learn a little more about the 'shameful members' of the men of Subu and admits his own desire to take a closer peek himself: 'Often I wished to see that of the young men and old men, because I did not believe it. In the middle of this pin or tube is a hole through which they urinate, and the pin and the stars always remain firm, holding the member stiff' (p. 90).

23 Raleigh, *The Historie of the World*, 33.

(1614) was drier in tone and tenor. A similarly dour tone is struck in the writings of Theodorus de Bry whose earlier account of Asia – published by his sons in 1601 – stays clear of subjects that were regarded as risqué in polite society then.

The seventeenth century was marked by a shift in the worldview of the Westerners who ventured to Asia, for by then the hold of the Church upon the masses in Europe was beginning to wane, and the continent witnessed the rise of the modern international trading company: In 1600 Queen Elizabeth granted the royal charter to form the Company of Merchants Trading with the East Indies, which would later evolve to become the East India Company. Almost immediately after that, the States General of the Netherlands granted a similar charter in 1602 to form the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), or the Dutch East Indies Company. Three French companies – the Compagnie de Chine, the Compagnie d'Orient and the Compagnie de Madagascar – would later also merge to form the Compagnie française pour le commerce des Indes orientales (French East India Company) in the 1660s.

An outstanding feature of these companies – the East India Company, the Dutch East Indies Company and the Compagnie française pour le commerce des Indes orientales – was how modern and secular they were in form and spirit. From the outset these were *militarised* commercial enterprises (Beckles' marriage of 'ledger and sword'[24]), empowered by the state to secure territories, wage war, capture prisoners, engage in diplomacy on the part of their respective states and obviously intended to make profit.

The men of the East India Company and the VOC were not cut from the same cloth that produced the Spanish and Portuguese missionary-conquistadores who ventured to Southeast Asia a century before them. While Pigafetta's account of Magellan's voyage to the archipelago was glutted with references to the 'Moor' who was the mortal threat to Christendom back home – a term that stuck, and which accounts for the continued use of the word '*Moro*' to denote Muslims in Southern Philippines until today – the company men of London and Amsterdam were less concerned with conversion and pious homilies, and more interested in profit. When the Dutch VOC took over the Portuguese bastion of A Famosa in Malacca, they changed the names of the buildings and offices built by the Portuguese according to their own set of market-determined, commercial values. The

24 Willson, *Ledger and Sword*.

Portuguese fort that was erected to witness the glory of God was turned into a temple of commerce instead, as Winstedt noted.[25]

The Western companies were also fiercely nationalist, and their operatives and employees were encouraged to remain so while they operated abroad in faraway lands. If Western Europe's sense of collective identity was framed in terms of common Christian brotherhood during the era of the Crusades, that sense of shared religious identity was relatively absent among the company men from England and the Netherlands once they found themselves in the Southeast Asian archipelago in the seventeenth century: The publication of the *True Relation of the Unjust, Cruel and Barbarous Proceedings against the English in Ambonya* in 1624 shocked England with its grisly details of the torture of English company men at the hands of the Dutch, and showed that once they were out in the East Indies there was no such thing as the bond of Christian brotherhood to keep Europeans together.[26]

The companies that operated in Southeast Asia were in fact *national* concerns, and those who joined them were expected to serve the interest of both the company and their country as well. So strong was this sense of national pride and obligation that the 1714 East Indies Trade Act which was passed by King George II forbade any Englishman from travelling to the archipelago on non-English ships, or seeking help from other Western nations or companies while there.[27]

25 Winstedt noted that 'The bastions of the *A Famosa* were given new names: St. Domingo became Victoria, Madre Dios was changed to Emilia, the Eleven Thousand Virgins gave place to Henriette Louise… The bastions no longer bore witness to the glories of God, but to the glory of the sponsors of unmitigated trade, and the walls of the *A Famosa*, ceasing to breathe the enchantment of Rome and the Middle Ages, became a stronghold for ledgers' (Winstedt, *Malaya and Its History*, 49).

26 Milton, *Nathaniel's Nutmeg*, 324-325. Years later the English were to take their revenge against the Dutch for denying them access to the Spice Islands, by invading the territory of New Amsterdam on the east coast of North America. The English invaded and captured Manhattan, renaming it 'New York'. They declared that they had no reason to apologise for the deed for it was 'fair exchange' for their losses in the East Indies.

27 Parliament of England, *An Act for the Better Securing the Lawful Trade*. This 1719 act stated that any English vessel travelling to or returning from the East Indies without the legal permit of the British government would have all its goods confiscated and brought to land; this also included all English vessels that were engaged in trade between the East Indies and continental Europe. Furthermore, the act explicitly forbade any Englishman from going to the East Indies on board any non-English ship, or serving on board non-English vessels in whatever capacity: 'Strictly charging and commanding all his Majesty's Subjects not to serve on board any foreign or other ships, with Foreign Commissions or Colours, bound to or from the East Indies, or any the parts aforesaid, to directly or indirectly, visit, haunt, frequent, trade, traffick or adventure, into or from the said East Indies or other parts before mentioned, contrary to Law' (p. 3).

For the Godly and pious in Europe the seventeenth century must have been a trying time indeed, when common religious values that once held men and nations together were fraying apart. The rise of the modern company contributed to the secularisation of Europe in unmistakable terms, and this was a cause of anxiety among those scholars who could not reconcile their traditional view of the world – shaped and informed as it was by scripture and revealed knowledge – and the new socio-economic realities that were emerging all around them. It was at this time that Theodorus de Bry and his sons Theodore and Israel de Bry produced some of their best work, which included some of the first graphic images of Southeast Asia to greet the Western gaze.

De Bry laboured at a time when the region that would later be known as Southeast Asia was not yet conceived of as a region with cultural-historical continuities and commonalities, and so he was less concerned about Southeast Asia as a whole, but more interested in particular localities that had caught the attention of the Western world. One such locality was the West Javanese kingdom of Banten, which was, by then, a thriving seaport and commercial centre that was governed by the native ruler of Banten and his court.[28]

By that time Europe's knowledge of the world beyond its borders was being challenged as a result of the maritime explorations that were being undertaken by Portuguese, Spanish, and later English, French and Dutch explorers. Up to the fifteenth century European accounts of the world were drawn largely from both classical (Hellenic, Ptolemaic, Arabic) sources as well as religious texts. Western geography was at its infancy then, when compared to the knowledge of the world already possessed by Arab, Indian, Chinese and other Asian mariners and cartographers. Europe's first point of contact with the outside world was the Arab civilisation that was its closest and oldest civilisational neighbour, but the legacy of the Crusades in the holy land meant that European perceptions of the world beyond were largely framed in competitive, even antagonistic, terms.

28 Banten's Grand Mosque (the Masjid Agung), built during the reign of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin (1552-1570), gives us some indication of the power that was once possessed by this kingdom, whose first ruler claimed descent from Sunan Gunung Jati. A closer look at the roof and minaret of the mosque, which are multi-tiered, also suggests a distant connection with Chinese architecture and it has been noted by scholars that the design of the mosque resembles that of a Chinese pagoda in some respects. This is one of the first indicators of Banten's interesting and complex past that points to the history of the kingdom as a cosmopolitan commercial centre where merchants, travellers, priests and mercenaries from across Asia once visited and settled in.

The centrality of Europe, which was an idea developed from an inward-looking and exclusive interpretation of scripture, was eventually challenged by the discoveries being made in navigation and astronomy. As Europeans began to venture beyond the Mediterranean in order to break free of the Arabs' control of the silk route to the East, the first generation of European navigators and explorers made contact with the New World: America. Grafton notes that for the first generation of geographers and cartographers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the discovery of a world beyond the narrow confines of Christian Europe was a traumatic one for it challenged the Bible's account of creation and the spread of humankind across the world. He writes of de Bry thus:

> Theodore de Bry, a Protestant refugee from Liege who settled in Strasbourg, began publishing his *America*, a multivolume compilation of previously published New World accounts, in 1590. After his death in 1598 his sons published volumes seven through twelve, and Matthieu Merian, his son-in-law, published the thirteenth and final volume in 1634… When de Bry looked at the New World, he projected unto it his theology and his politics. The engravings of Adam and Eve in the first volume and of Noah and the Ark in the second are integral to his vision of a New World whose peoples, however admirable, were irredeemably lost because they lived outside Christianity. Given de Bry's point of view, it is no surprise that idolatry and cannibalism figure so prominently in his title pages.[29]

De Bry was hardly a liberal by any standards, though living and working as he did at a time when the European worldview was hardly challenged by any solid counterfactuals and when knowledge – as defined by the authorities that controlled the few universities in Europe – was necessarily shaped and valued according to the criteria set by religious standards, it is understandable that he could not imagine that other societies and nations could possess the same standards of civilisation as his own. This contrast, between the civilised and uncivilised, was most clearly evident in his writings on the New World, where images of Native Americans were invariably accompanied by not-so-subtle references to their 'barbarism and cruelty'. In de Bry's account of America, the latter is framed and visually depicted as the exact opposite of everything that Europe was: If Europe was seen as cultured, ordered and peaceful, then the New World was configured as an uncivilised land that was populated by brutal natives who lived disordered and violent lives. (The

29 Grafton, *New World, Ancient Texts*, 128-129.

theme if cannibalism was most prevalent in the copperplate engravings found in Theodorus and Johann Theodore de Bry's work on America.)

After the death of Theodorus in 1598, his writings and engravings of the East Indies were compiled and published in the form of the *Icones Indiae Orientalis* that was put together by Johann Theodore and Johann Israel. Published in 1601, this was one of the first works on the East Indies available in Europe at the time, and it contained some of the earliest images of life in the East. For the reader who is familiar with the images of Native Americans in his earlier work on the New World, de Bry's images of daily life in the East Indies could not be more striking in contrast.

The censorious tone that was read off the pages of de Bry's work on America are nowhere to be found in the *Icones Indiae Orientalis.* For here de Bry was forced to concede that the world of the East Indies was one where Asian communities had developed their own system of commerce, governance, religious praxis and culture to a level that rivalled Europe's. De Bry's plates included images of the Sultan of Banten, Bantenese weddings, market scenes, scenes at court, various types of Asian ships at sea and a range of full-figure vignettes that depicted the plural and cosmopolitan society that resided in Banten then, which included Javanese, Sundanese, Sumatrans, Arabs, Persians, Indians, Burmese, Chinese and other Asians.[30]

The section on Banten begins with plate XV: *Qvae Ratio Conditiove Portvvm et Navivum Stationis ad ciuitatem Bantam*. From the outset, de Bry identifies Banten as a Muslim polity and this is clear in the two subsequent plates, plate XVIII: *Solemnitas Nvptialis Bantam* and plate XIX: *Qvo Ritv Habitvve Dvces Sev Capitanei Per Viam publiceincedant*, which feature images of a local wedding as well as a detailed depiction of the ruler of Banten.

30 Thirteen of the plates (plates I-XIII) features images and maps of India and Madagascar. Plate XIV (*Habitvs Moresqve Insvlae Svmatra Incolarvm*) looks at Sumatra, and is accompanied by a short description of the dress and manners of the Muslim ruler of Sumatra (de Bry and Israel, *Icones Sive Expressae et Artifitiosae*, vol. I, p.d.3, plate XIV). The description of Banten (and other parts of Java) commences from plates XV to XXXI. The order of the engravings is as follows: plate XV: *Qvae Ratio Conditiove Portvvm Et Navivum Stationis ad ciuitatem Bantam*, plate XVIII: *Solemnitas Nvptialis Bantam*, plate XIX: *Qvo Ritv Habitvve Dvces Sev Capitanei Per Viam publiceincedant*, plate XX: *Milites In Bantam*, plate XXI: *Extraneorvm Mercatorvm In Bantam*, plate XXII: *Mercantorvm Extraneorvm In Bantam*, plate XXIII: *Mercantorvm Ex China In Bantam*, plate XXIV: *Chinensivm In Bantam Svperstitio Et Idolatria*, plate XXV: *Qvo Ritv Bantani Concilia Militaria Agant*, plate XXVI: *Rusticorvm, Qvi Pridemivxta Civitatem Bantam*, plate XXVII: *Triremes Sev Galiottae Et Fvstae Iavenenfium*, plate XXVIII: *Navivm, Qvibvs Bantani Vtvntvr, Generaquatuor*, plate XXIX: *Chorea Sev Tripvdivm Iavanorvm*, plate XXX: *Charagma Pelvivm Sive Cymbalorvm, Qvibvs Iavani Campanarum, Muficorum inftumentorum aliorum loco vtuntur*, plate XXXI: *Nafaria Obtrvncatio Qvorvndam In Navi Hollandia dieta, a Iauanenfibus inftituta*. The references here are based on the original manuscript in the Farish A. Noor collection, Singapore.

The ruler is shown walking beneath a parasol and he wears a turban on his head – a common motif at the time that signified the Muslim faith of the subject in question. The developed political system in Banten is depicted in some of the plates that follow, notably plate XX: *Milites In Bantam*, plate XXV: *Qvo Ritv Bantani Concilia Militaria Agant* and plate XXVI: *Rusticorvm, Qvi Pridemivxta Civitatem Bantam*. The first offers a description of the armed forces of Banten, and a brief description of the soldiery there. The second offers a glimpse of a political council, where the sultan presides over his court. Interestingly, the text that accompanies the illustration notes that also present at this political assembly were Malays (from the Malay Peninsula), Arabs and Turks (*Malayos, Turca, Arabes*).

The theme of pluralism is further explored in the plates that depict the various communities that were present in Banten, such as plate XXI: *Extraneorvm Mercatorvm In Bantam*, plate XXII: *Mercantorvm Extraneorvm In Bantam*, plate XXIII: *Mercantorvm Ex China In Bantam*, and plate XXIV: *Chinensivm In Bantam Svperstitio et Idolatria*. The extent to which these communities had been able to integrate and settle in Banten is emphasised further in plate XXIV, which features the image of Chinese inhabitants praying at a local Chinese temple, engaged in what de Bry described as 'superstition and idolatry' (*Svperstitio et Idolatria*). Compared to the depiction of the Native Americans who were often shown carrying out wanton acts of cruelty and cannibalism, de Bry was unable to launch into a tirade in the case of Banten. Nor was he able to describe the Bantenese as a backward or primitive people, for it was clear that Banten was by then a widely-known and well-connected commercial centre that had managed to attract merchants and voyagers from across Asia and beyond.[31]

The noteworthy feature of the images found in de Bry's account of the Indies is that they point to a civilisation that had developed outside of Europe and beyond the pale of Christianity. That he was forced to concede the fact that Banten was indeed a successful commercial centre was plainly evident – for that was the reason why the Europeans had ventured there, and why he was writing and illustrating a book about it, too. But this posed a major challenge for men like de Bry whose own cultural-religious education had inculcated the belief in the primacy and centrality of Christian Europe, and who found it difficult, as Grafton has noted, to accept that there could

31 Plates XXVII: *Triremes Sev Galiottae Et Fvstae Iavenenfium* and XXVIII: *Navivm, Qvibvs Bantani Vtvntvr, Generaquatuor* feature images of ships of all kinds that were then found in the port of Banten and testify to how extensive Banten's international commercial links were by then.

be another path to development that did not follow the European-Christian way.[32] The same 'shock of discovery' – to borrow Grafton's phrase – was in store for another traveller-writer who was a contemporary of Theodorus de Bry: Sir Walter Raleigh.

Flamboyant, erudite and ultimately ill-fated, Sir Walter Raleigh remains for many an archetype of the Elizabethan era. He made his name in the service of his queen, though following her death in 1603 he soon fell out of favour with King James I and was ultimately executed after his (second) failed expedition to South America in search of the fabled city of El Dorado.

Unlike Theodorus de Bry, who had never ventured beyond Europe, Raleigh had been entrusted with the exploration of Virginia and Guiana, experiences that must have compelled him to question some of the apocryphal accounts of the world that he had been taught and which were shaped by Old Testament accounts of genesis and creation. The other difference between de Bry and Raleigh was that the latter was a man of action, and was often caught in the midst of political intrigues that endangered his life. Between 1603 and 1616, he was arrested and imprisoned by the king on the charge of taking part in the 'main plot' to depose King James I and have the monarch replaced with the king's cousin, Arabella Stuart. It was during this period of imprisonment that the explorer was given the opportunity to write. The result was the monumental *Historie of the World* (1614).[33]

32 Grafton, *New World, Ancient Texts*, 128.

33 In *The Historie of the World* Raleigh had set out to write a history of the known world from the time of Adam to the present, and after the long introduction where he dwelt on the subject of Paradise (chapters 1 to 4), he elaborates on the story of Noah and the great flood, the final resting place of the Ark, and the emergence of nations that were the result of the unions by the sons of Noah: Sem, Ham and Japhet (chapters 8 and 9). Book II begins with the story of Abraham (chapter 1) and goes on to the subject of the flight of Moses from Egypt (chapters 2-3). Chapters 7 and 8 touch on the history of the Phoenicians, while chapters 9 and 10 look at the tribe of Ephraim. Interspersed between these Old Testament accounts are stories from the Greek classics, and chapters 13 and 14 dwell on the story of the siege of Troy. Chapters 17 and 18 return to the Abrahamic tradition and recount the stories of David and Solomon. Book III begins with the fall of Jerusalem and the rise of Assyria, and in it Raleigh recount the stories of the Persian kings from Cyrus (chapter 3) to Darius (chapter 4) to Xerxes (chapter 6). The rise of Greece is covered starting in chapter 7, leading to the Peloponnesian War (chapters 8-9). Book IV begins with the story of Philip, father of Alexander the Great (chapter 1), to Alexander (chapter 2) and then the reign of Aridaeus (chapter 3). Asia becomes increasingly prominent from chapter 4 which looks at 'the great Lordfhip which Antigonus got in Afia', all the way to chapter 6, which looks at the Asian kingdoms and dynasties that were built by the successors of Alexander in his name. Chapter 7 brings the reader back to Europe as it looks at the rise of Rome. Book V begins with the Punic War, leading all the way to the war between the Romans and Antiochus the Great (chapter 5). Throughout the work, Raleigh's definition and use of the term 'Asia' is broad and all-inclusive, in keeping with the classical understanding of Asia that

Trapped as he was within the dreary walls of the prison that confined him, it is not surprising to note that Raleigh begins his account of the history of the entire known world with the theme of Paradise. Writing as he did at a time when modern discoveries were challenging the received wisdom of bygone ages, Raleigh attempted to reconcile both scripture and science in the most literal manner imaginable: He asserts that 'there was a true locall Paradife Eaftward, in the Countrie of Eden'.[34] Like de Bry, Raleigh was concerned to protect and preserve the sanctity of scripture in the face of science, and being a man of science himself – the science of navigation – he sought to prove that science did not refute the claims of the ancients, but could actually be used in the service of scripture instead.

Of those who doubted the existence of Paradise on earth, or knew not how to find it, Raleigh was contemptuous of their lack of geographical knowledge:

> Of the feate and place of Paradife, all ages haue held difpute; and the opinions and iudgements haue been in effect, as diuers, as among thofe that haue written vp on this part of Genefis, as vpon any one place therein, feeming moft obfcure: fome there are, that haue conceiued the being of a terreftrial Paradife, without all regard to the worlds Geographie and without any refpect to Eaft and Weft, or any confideration of the place where Mofes wrote, and from whence he directed the way how to finde out and iudge, in what region of the world this garden was by God planted, wherein he was exceeding refpective and precife.[35]

If God could be 'respective and precise' in his location of Paradise, then men could and should surely follow the same rules of interpretation and calculation and thus be able to figure out where Paradise truly was. And it was in *interpretation* that Raleigh found the clue to the location of Eden, for he argued that its location was evidenced in its *name*:

> And how foeuer the vulgar tranflation haft conuerted this place thus, 'The Lord God planted a Paradife of pleafure from the beginning'; putting

saw it as a vast region stretching all the way from Anatolia to China. Nowhere in the text does the term 'Southeast Asia' emerge, which would be understandable as it had not been coined yet, but in books I and IV Raleigh does present India as a distinct part of Asia, which extends to the East, and which corresponds to the popular notion of 'Greater India' that was in currency then among scholars and cartographers alike.

34 Raleigh, *The Historie of the World*, book I, chapter 3.III, 35.

35 Ibid., book I, chapter 3.I, 33.

> the word 'Pleafure' for Eden, and 'from the beginning' for Eaftward: It is manifeft, that this place Eden, is the proper name for a Region. For what fenfe hath this tranflation that He planted a garden in pleafure, or that a Riuer went out of Pleafure to water the garden? But the Feuentie Interpreters call it Paradifus Edenis, the Paradife of Eden, and fo doth the Chaldean Paraphraf truly take it for the proper name of a place, and for a Noune appellatiue; which region in refpect of the fertilitie of the foile, of the many beautiful Riuers, and goodly Woods, & that the trees as in the Indies doe alwaies keepe their leaues, was called Eden, which fignifieth in the Hebrew pleafantneffe or delicacie.[36]

That the soil was fertile and the trees did not shed their leaves in the Indies meant that Eden lay somewhere in the East for Raleigh. It also meant that the voyages to Asia were not merely scientific in their scope and ambition, but also eschatological, a search of a point of lost origin, a paradise from which humankind had been cast out. He rejected the notion that Paradise could have been the earth as a whole, for that would entail that 'Adam was driuen out of the World into the World, and out of Paradife and into Paradife'.[37]

Through deliberation, and checking himself as he went along, Raleigh slowly worked his way to the conclusion that he wanted – and needed – to arrive at: That Eden does exist, and that it lies in Asia to the East. Citing the palm tree of East India as his proof, he noted that 'thofe Trees which the Eaft Indies so highly efteeme and fo much admire (as indeed the Earth yeeldeth no plant comparable to this) thofe Trees (I fay) are in this upper Babylon, or Region of Eden'[38] – and that they were proof of the bounty and benevolence of God who would not create anything for nothing.[39]

The Indies – which had, by then, been explored by European merchant-explorers – was literally proof of the munificence of an all-giving and loving God, for why else would the land be bestowed with such wonders such as trees that did not shed their leaves, and which bore fruit all year round? De Bry may have regarded the people of India and Java whom he illustrated as heathens who did not heed the calling of Christ, but Raleigh regarded their lands as the Eden of yesteryear and the cradle of humankind. Neither of them denied the reality of the Indies and its abundant wealth, though both

36 Ibid., book I, chapter 3.III, 35-36.
37 Ibid., book I, chapter 3.VI, 42-43.
38 Ibid., book I, chapter 3.VII, 56.
39 Ibid., book I, chapter 3.V, 41; XV, 64.

tried to reconcile that reality with their own beliefs in different ways and attempted to bring that reality into the final moral-religious narrative that was part of their identity as Christian Europeans of the seventeenth century.

The marriage of science, geography and scripture came together in the form of the maps that accompanied Raleigh's work, of which two stand out in particular: His map of West Asia[40] and East Asia,[41] which brought the entire region of Asia into his biblical worldview. In the first, Paradise is clearly marked in the land of Babylon between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, with a tiny vignette of Adam and Eve standing beneath the tree of Paradise. The precise location of Paradise, according to Raleigh, was identified as Qurna – though the Norfolk Regiment that was sent there to shield Abadan from the Turks in World War I found only mosquitoes when they arrived.[42] In the second map of Asia the Ark of Moses is seen squarely in the middle of the map, tucked between between Mount Ararat and the Taurus mountains. To the east of the Ark is depicted the passage of the army of Ophir on its march into India, with Aracan (Arakan), Pegu, Sumatra and Malacca clearly identified. If de Bry was unable to account for the culture and civilisation of the Javanese who had lived beyond the pale of Christendom, Raleigh had dragged the whole of Asia, and the Southeast Asian archipelago as well, into the annals of Old Testament history.

Raleigh never managed to complete the history that he set out to write: After another failed expedition to South America he was arrested and finally executed at the command of King James in 1618, who later ordered that all remaining copies of the *Historie* be confiscated. With his passing, and the demise of Theodorus de Bry who died before him, geography and theology parted ways and were rarely seen together again.

What is interesting about the works of these men is how they attempted, in a somewhat convoluted fashion, to conciliate two different visions of the world that seemed incongruous at first glance. But the anxiety of de

40 Ibid., book I, chapter 3.Section XV, 64-65.

41 Ibid., book I, chapter 7.VI-VII, 128-129.

42 The Norfolk Regiment was sent to Qurna to halt the advance of the Turks, and was later moved to Basra. The environs of Qurna turned out to be unpleasant, giving rise to the barrack-room ballad:

You want to know the riddle?
I'll tell you the riddle. Well,
If Qurna's the Garden of Eden
Then where the devil is Hell?

Among those who took part in this action was Second Lieutenant John Brownrigg, who was later killed in the action around Basra. I am grateful to my friend Henry Brownrigg for this anecdote.

Bry and Raleigh were also symptomatic of the times they lived in, which was a century that would witness the unravelling of the older notion of a united Christendom and the emergence of the nation-state. The Thirty Years' War of 1618-1648, which came after the French Wars of Religion of 1562-1598, would lead to the Peace of Westphalia, after which religion would become a state concern, weakening what was once regarded as the common religio-cultural bond that united and identified Europeans as distinct from others. And as the seventeenth century progressed, a new generation of company men would take over the task of defining the West as they mapped out the rest of the world, and in the course of doing so they would lay the foundations of what would later be the *idea* of Southeast Asia. For such men, the lure of Southeast Asia lay in the immediate material profits it promised rather than the hope of salvation in the hereafter.

2.c According to the Logic of the Modern Company: The Ordering of the East Indies by Johan Nieuhof

The superabundant cornucopia of the Indies may have been proof of God's benevolence for Sir Walter Raleigh, but for the men of the British East India Company and the Dutch East Indies Company, that abundance equalled profits hitherto unimaginable.

The men who served the company were not, however, all illiterate money-grabbers who were simply out in the East Indies for the sake of lining their pockets. Some of them took up the pen and wrote extensively about their experiences in Southeast Asia – a practice that may have earned them additional earnings through the sales of their books back in Europe, but which also contributed to the growing body of knowledge of the East Indies among Europeans. Wouter Schouten wrote about his travels in the Southeast Asian archipelago (undertaken between 1658 to 1665) in 1708, and his work was immediately translated into several other European languages the same year.[43]

Another noteworthy company-man-turned-writer was Johan Nieuhof, whose lasting legacy came in the form of his impressive work, with the wordy title *Zee- en Lant-Reise door verscheide Gewesten van Oostindien, behelzende veele zeldzaame en wonderlijke voorvallen en geschiedenissen.*

43 Schouten, *Voiage de Gautier Schouten aux Indes Orientales*. The work was later republished in several editions, such as Wouter Schouten, *Reys – Togten naar en door Oost-Indien* (Amsterdam: Gerrit Tielenburg en Jan 'Tlam. 1740).

Beneffens een beschrijving van lantschappen, dieren, gewassen, draghten, zeden en godsdienst der inwoonders: En inzonderheit een wijtloopig verhael der Stad Batavia (1682).[44] The work was unrivalled at the time thanks to the extraordinary amount of detail that went into its writing, with much of the information in the work culled by Nieuhof himself who was a company man who liaised directly with the communities he traded with.[45]

Though Nieuhof's visual plates were peerless in terms of their detail and accuracy, his own written account of the land and peoples of Southeast Asia did occasionally slip into the domain of the fanciful. In his account of Malacca and its society, he gave a vivid account of the Malays there, notably the women who obviously caught his eye.[46] But he also wrote about a curious race of people who apparently were naturally-born night owls who could only work at night:

> There is also another peculiar fort of men in Malacca, call'd by the Dutch Kakerlakken (from a certain Monstrous Creature in the Indies of the fame Name), who are blind by Day and who can only fee at Night. They can tell Money, Work and do any other Thing in the Dark, which they cannot do by Daylight, which they pafs away for the moft part in Sleeping, and feldom rise till Sun-fet. In Shape and Proportion of their Limbs, as well as by their Complection, they resemble the Europeans; having commonly

44 All quotations from this work presented here are from an English translation of this work that was published in 1704: Nieuhof, *Voyages and Travels into Brasil*.

45 Nieuhof's globetrotting ways began from his childhood, as he was born along the Dutch-German border in Uelsen. He later took up a post in the Dutch West Indies Company and was sent to Brazil to scout for information for the company; after which he made several journeys to China and the East Indies. After transferring himself to the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC), he was based in Batavia, Java. He was then sent to China as part of the trading embassy there. His stay in China was marred by allegations of corruption – related to some pearls of dubious provenance that had come into his possession – and he was later removed from the company as a result. In 1672 he was reported missing on the island of Madagascar and little is known of his fate. Despite the controversies that hounded him to the end of his career, Nieuhof was one of the first European explorer-merchants who studied the societies that the Dutch traded with. Along with his brother, Hendrik Nieuhof, he produced hundreds of images of Brazil, China and the East Indies that were among the most accurate depictions of the peoples in those parts of the world, as well as visual studies of plants, animals and landscapes.

46 On the Malays of Malacca, Nieuhof wrote thus: 'The Malayars or natives of Malacca are Tawny, with long Black Hair, Great Eyes and Flat Nofes; they deduce their origins from the Javanefes, but their eyes are quite different, they are for the Moft partly naked, wearing only a piece of Stuff wrapt around the Middle, with their arms and legs naked. Their only ornaments being Gold bracelets and earrings fet with precious stones, Fome of which are twifted in their locks, which are very long. The women are Extravagantly proud here, expecting more reverence than any other Indian women' (Nieuhof, *Voyages and Travels into Brasil*, 215).

> Grey Eyes, whereas all the Eaftern nations have Black, and Dark Brown eyes. Their hair is inclining to Yellow, and of Fuch a Length among the Women, that it reaches down to their Hipps; Their Feet are bent inward. The Fame kind is likewife found in fome other parts of the Indies.[47]

We are left with no further information as to who or what these curious 'Kakerlakken' were. The reader is equally clueless about the mysterious people of Batufabar (Batusabar), who lived somewhere between Riao (Riau), Johr (Johor) and Sinkapura (Singapore) who were, according to Nieuhof 'Lafcivious, Lyers, great Diffemblers and Proud beyond meafure' and whose skin was 'light Blue' in colour.[48] (The blueness of the Batusabarans and the yellow hair of the Kakerlakken were, unfortunately, impossible to capture in Nieuhof's engravings as chromolithography was not invented yet in 1682.)

Notwithstanding the occasional errors that besmirch his work (Nieuhof mistakenly dates the conquest of Malacca by the Portuguese as 1610[49]) and his occasional lapse into fantasy, Nieuhof's account of life in the East Indies was comprehensive as it was detailed. His focus was the port city of Batavia where he was based as a VOC company officer between 1648 to 1654; and in his account of the city he gives a vivid description of its many features, including the town house, spin-house, slaughter-house, stables, the children's hospital, the house of artisans, the rice magazine, the rice market, the fish market, the bird market, the fruit market, the city armoury, the pest house and the environment around the city.[50] Nieuhof's work was accompanied by several large double-page engravings of Dutch-built building in the city, such as *The Tygers Graft of Batavia, The Church of the Cross of Batavia* and *The Hospital for Children of Batavia,*[51] as well as single-page engravings *The Hospital for the Sick, The Hall for the Sale of Stuffs and Cloth, The Chinese Hospital, The Lodgings of the Artisans Belonging to the Company, The Latin School, The Brickworks, The Pest House, The Place Where They Whiten Their Linnen* and *Fort Rys-Wick*.[52]

The view that the reader gets of Batavian society, as seen through the eyes of Nieuhof, is a cosmopolitan one: He noted that 'Chinefe doctors' were working at the Chinese hospital[53] in the city, while 'Negroes' were

47 Ibid., 215.
48 Ibid., 216.
49 Ibid., 213. Malacca fell to the Portuguese in 1511.
50 Ibid., 305, 306, 306, 306, 307, 308, 309, 309, 309, 310, 310, 311, 313, 314.
51 Ibid., 304-305 and 306-307.
52 Ibid., 305, 307, 308, 309, 310, 312, 313, 314, 315.
53 Ibid., 307.

selling fruit at the fruit market, alongside 'Moors', Indians and other Asian communities that had settled there.[54] Earlier in the same work, in his account of his journey to the coast of India, his text is accompanied by one of the first – and rare – images of a Eurasian-Indian mestiza woman.[55] Such hybrid, liminal personalities also figure in his account of Batavia and the East Indies, where he devotes a passage to the '*Mardikers* or *Topaffers* (Topazers)' who were a 'mix of Indian nations'[56] and whose dress was similar to the Dutch and other Europeans.[57] Nieuhof's work was, and remains, known for its truly exceptional plates – that were reproduced in subsequent editions and translations of the work, including Churchill's English edition published in 1704. Perhaps the most amazing full-page plate of all is that of *A Negro Peddler and His Wife*, which may be the very first image of an African man and his family living in the East Indies at the time.[58]

These images are all accompanied by written accounts of the various communities that are depicted in the text, and in Nieuhof's report on the many different communities then residing in Batavia he dwells at length about their manners and customs, behaviour and appearance, and also their subject-position in the market-driven economy of the port city.[59] And yet despite the detail that he put into his work – both in terms of his written data as well as the images that accompany the text – there remains one community that is missing from his visual account of life in the East Indies: the Dutch.

54 Ibid., 310.

55 Ibid., plate: *A Meftice* [*mestizo*] *Woman*, facing page 251.

56 By 'Indian' Nieuhof was presumably referring to the East Indies, which was still then widely regarded as part of 'Greater India'. As such, he was not suggesting that the Mardikers were of South Asian origin, but rather of Southeast Asian origin, and that many of them were the result of inter-ethnic marriages between Europeans and Southeast Asians, too.

57 The word 'Mardiker' comes from the Malay word '*merdeka*', which referred to free men who were often of mixed ethnic background. They were also called '*topazers*' for they were identified with the topaz stone. Nieuhof's account of the Mardikers of Batavia reads thus: 'The Mardikers or Topaffers are a mixture of divers Indian nations, call'd Topaffers because they will accommodate themselfes easily to the Manners, Cuftoms and Religion of fuch as they live among; tho' fome will have them derive their Name from a precious stone call'd a Topaze. They live both within and without the City, The Chiefeft of which being Merchants, who traffick with their own Veffels with the adjacent Ifles, live in very Ftately Houfes. The reft live upon Hufbandry, grafing and gardening, and have some Artifans among them; they have their own Captains, who fit upon the Council of War; and School-Mafters, who teach their Children to Read and Write' (Nieuhof, *Voyages and Travels into Brasil*, 316).

58 The plates are inserted into the text, between pp. 314-315 and 316-317.

59 Ibid., 313-319.

That the Dutch are missing in Nieuhof's plates is hardly surprising, considering the fact that he was, after all, writing a report of the East Indies that was meant for consumption back home in Europe. Nieuhof was less interested in what his fellow Dutchmen looked like, for he only had to look into a mirror to see a sample himself; but was keen to demonstrate the achievements of the Dutch East Indies Company – hence the architectural studies of Dutch-built schools, forts, hospitals and canals that featured so prominently in his work.[60] These images also reinforced the fact that Batavia was a *Dutch space* – unlike Banten, which was the subject of de Bry's work and which was a local *Javanese* polity before it came to be eclipsed by Batavia half a century later.

The Eurocentric gaze that is evident in Nieuhof's work, and his choice of subjects, is clear enough to see: His images repeat the logic of ethnocentric perspectivism in the manner that they rank different ethnic types according to a Eurocentric standard of civilisation. The Eurasian Mardiker is shown wearing European dress, standing before what appears to be his private estate somewhere in the vicinity of Batavia. He holds a cane that suggests some degree of autonomy and authority; and his wife stands beside him, presenting his child for him (and others) to see. In the background his estate is clearly seen, with gardens and fences that are well kept. In the right background can be seen a stable of sorts, with neat, clean and happy hogs smiling away at the prospect of being served for dinner later. By contrast, the 'Soldier of Amboina' plate features a full-frontal portrait of the warrior in question with sword and shield in hand, and a severed human head lying on the ground by his feet – that is being further mutilated by two nondescript native boys who exhibit obvious delight with their new bloody toy. The contrast between the two plates is striking: The property-owning, European-dressed Eurasian is shown in his happy state, confident and at ease *without* weapons and in an environment that is ordered and prosperous. The Ambonese warrior, on the other hand, is depicted as bare-footed, set against a somewhat wild though picturesque landscape, and has clearly cut off some unfortunate's head. The former suggests civility and civilisation; the latter, primordial savagery and backwardness. If the Dutch had built

60 The civilising role of the Dutch in Batavia is a theme that Nieuhof returns to again and again. When writing about the schools that the Dutch had built in the city, he noted that all the books in Batavia had been brought all the way from Holland (ibid., 310) and that the Dutch had also opened a new printing press in the city.

hospitals and schools for the children of Batavia,[61] the warriors of Ambon seemed content to let their kids play with decapitated heads instead.

Equally noteworthy is the fact that Nieuhof's depiction of the Ambon warrior obscures the fact that Ambon was indeed the site of violence in the past, but the violence that was perpetrated there was done not by the Ambonese but rather the Dutch, whose victims were the English. (Nowhere in his text does Nieuhof mention the infamous 'Ambon massacre' where English merchants were captured, tortured and murdered by the Dutch in their bid to control the spice islands, as Nieuhof's work focused more on Dutch achievements in the present rather than their misdeeds in the past.[62])

A typological ordering of sorts can be detected in the engravings of Nieuhof, where more sedentary, mercantilist communities are depicted in a manner that presents them as more civilised or closer to a civilised ideal than others: Right up at the top of the ranking is the image of the Eurasian Mardiker and his estate, along with the plates *The Habit of a Malayar and His Wife in Batavia, A Merchant of Java, A Javanese Man and Woman* and *A Negro Peddler and His Wife*. In these plates we see couples or families living together, and enjoying varying degrees of wealth and comfort under the rule of the Dutch. By contrast the plates *Tymorian Soldiers, Makafsar Soldiers as They Blow Poison'd Darts, A Bougis* [*Bugis*] *or Bokjes* and the *Soldier of Amboina* depict the native communities of the East Indies in their 'natural state', so to speak – engaged in acts of wanton ferocity with poisoned darts, blowpipes, spears, swords flying in all directions. The racial-ethnic ordering in Nieuhof's typology is clear, and by virtue of being of mixed Eurasian descent the Mardikers/Topazes were, as far as Nieuhof was concerned, the community that most closely resembled the Europeans who were by default regarded as the most honoured, dignified and civilised among the lot.[63]

While blue-skinned Batusabarans and ghoulish night-walking Kakerlakken may be wandering about in other parts of the East Indies, no abnormalities were to be seen in Nieuhof's Batavia, that was a well-ordered *Western*

61 Ibid., 306-307, 310.

62 Milton, *Nathaniel's Nutmeg*, 324-325.

63 Nieuhof's measure of civilisation was based on two criteria: commercial activity and education. In his work he noted that apart from European children who were sent to the European schools in Batavia, the only other community whose children demonstrated the same capacity for learning was the Mardikers/Topazes: 'On the Tygers-Gracht is the Latin and Greek School; the back fide of it reaching to the Kaymans-Gracht, with a Lofty Stone-Gate. It has a very pleasant court, where the school-boys may divert themfelves at certain-times. The Rector of the school has a very handfome houfe; Befides this school, there are divers other schools at Batavia for the inftruction of young people in Reading and Writing; in which fome of the natives, and efpecially the Topaffes, are fo ingenious' (Nieuhof, *Voyages and Travels into Brasil*, 310).

space where Dutch power was paramount. In Batavia the Southeast Asian natives were of a more recognisable variety, though they all lived under the tutelage and patronage of the one community that was not native to the region, the Dutch. Nieuhof himself made that abundantly clear when he wrote that 'The inhabitants of Batavia conſiſt either of the Citizens, or ſuch as are Servants of the Company, being of divers Nations; among whom the Dutch exceed the reſt both in Riches and Dignity, moſt places of Honour and Profit being in their Hands.'[64]

The fact that the Dutch exceeded the rest 'both in riches and dignity' and held control over 'most places of honour and profit' was for Nieuhof both a self-evident and natural fact that he neither questioned or challenged, as he was himself then a functionary of the Dutch East Indies Company, and was presumably among those happily placed at the highest level of society; and therefore able to view the kaleidoscope of Batavian social life through his Eurocentric, panoptic gaze.[65] All these communities, living as they did under Dutch law and political authority, were expected to abide by the rules set by the Dutch and to serve the company in times of crisis.[66] The complex and cosmopolitan world of Nieuhof's Batavia was an *ordered* one, and the order was imposed and maintained by the company he worked for.

64 Ibid. 313-314.

65 Nieuhof's work included a lengthy and detailed description of the government of the city of Batavia, which he noted was built on the same basis as the Dutch government in the United Provinces, and administered by 'Six Particulars, or Councils'. The highest council was the Council of the Indies, where the Dutch governor-general of the East Indies presided. (At the time the governor-general was Mr. Maetzuiper of the company.) Below the High Council was the Council of Justice, whose 'chief buſineſs is to take care that no Incroachments be made upon the Prerogatives of the Sovereignty of the United Provinces' (Nieuhof, *Voyages and Travels into Brasil*, 317). The third council was the Council of Aldermen or Senators, whose function was to mediate in all affairs and disputes between the company, the Batavian government and the citizens and residents of the city. The fourth council was the 'Council of Overseers of the Hospital and of Orphans'; the fifth was the 'Council for the Determination of Matters Leſs Moment'; and the sixth was the 'Council of War', where 'all the courts have each their own Secretary, Clerks and Waiters' (ibid., 318). It should be noted that apart from the clerks, waiters and other lower functionaries, all of these important posts in all six councils were held by Dutchmen.

66 Nieuhof's account of Batavia's population included a tally of all the communities that resided there, in the 1660s-1670s. As he noted, 'Among the Foreign Nations reſiding here, there may, according to computation, be raiſed 6,720 Fighting Men, viz. 400 Topaffers, or Mardiiken, under two captains, within the city, besides 710 without the city under three Captains; making in all 1110; of Regantiins 70; Amboynefes 600; Malayars 201; Chinefes 1,200; Moors 200; Of the Javanefes within their Quarter within the New Gate, 750; Near the burying place of the Chinefes 1,500; In their Quarter beyond the New Fort 800; And of Baſilians beyond the fort 300' (Nieuhof, *Voyages and Travels into Brasil*, 317).

So popular and influential was Nieuhof's work that it would later be republished and translated into several languages. But more popular were the plates that he and his brother Hendrik produced, which would later be copied and reproduced by other writers and artists across Europe. In the decades that followed, the images from Nieuhof's *Zee- en Lant-Reise door verscheide Gewesten van Oostindien* would be imitated by many other European engravers, and would find themselves in numerous works on Southeast Asia, such as Jean-François de La Harpe's *Abrégé de l'histoire générale des voyages* (1780).

Gone were the monsters, the giants, the headless men with faces on their chests that once adorned the charts and maps of Southeast Asia produced in the West. In the detailed images in Nieuhof's work real life was exotic and strange enough. But it is also interesting to note that some of Nieuhof's images proved more popular than others: The complexity of Southeast Asian society that was captured by the images of the mestiza woman, the Eurasian Mardiker and the Negro peddler of Batavia would later be forgotten, while the blood-curdling image of the head-chopping Ambonese warrior would linger on, to spook future generations of Europeans who would later be enthralled by stories of headhunters, pirates and cannibals in the land that Raleigh once regarded as Eden.[67]

Cannibals made their appearance again in William Marsden's work *The History of Sumatra* (1783). Like Nieuhof, Marsden the company man was scrupulous and thorough in his account of the island he was based at.[68] Like

67 Nieuhof's image of the Ambon warrior was reproduced under the title *Insulaire D'Amboine, arme pour la guerre* in M. De La Harpe, Prevost (ed), *Abrege de L'Histoire Generale des Voyages*, De Thou, Paris, 1780. *Abrégé de l'Histoire Générale des Voyages, contenant ce qu'il y a de plus remarquable, de plus utile & de mieux avéré dans les Pays où les Voyageurs ont pénétré ; les moeurs des Habitants, la Religion, les Usages, Art & Sciences, Commerce, Manufactures ; enrichie de Cartes géographiques & de figures*, where it appears in volume IV, plate 29, facing page 213. Also in the same volume is the image of the Javanese couple in Batavia, under the title *Homme et Femme de Ifle de Java* in volume IV, plate 28, facing page 162.

68 William Marsden's *The History of Sumatra* was first published in 1783, and later republished in 1784 and 1811. He wrote his work while he was serving under the East India Company and many of his observations were based on his personal experiences while he was stationed in Sumatra (Marsden, *The History of Sumatra* (1811), vi). Marsden noted in the preface of his book that by the time he worked on the subject 'the commercial importance of Sumatra had much declined' (p. i) and that 'it was no longer the emporium of the Indies' (p. i). His work was intended to further advance the knowledge of the island, for despite the fact that other Europeans such as the Portuguese and Spanish had been in the region long before the arrival of the British, he found their scholarship lacking, as 'the Portuguese were better warriors than philosophers, more eager to conquer nations than to explore their manners and antiquities' and 'it is not surprising that they should have been unable to furnish the world with any particular and just description

the Dutch company officials and scholars who were then his contemporaries and rivals, Marsden's approach was realist, objective and precise; his work was intended to fill a major gap in knowledge of the East Indies, and counts as one of the first serious studies of the land, people, culture and resources of Sumatra at the time. And like Nieuhof, Marsden listed out the salient features of Sumatran society and its economy, and his work was both a history of the island and its inhabitants as well as a detailed report on the state of its economy – which had, by then, been eclipsed by the newly-established European trading centres in places like Batavia.

In the work of Marsden there was no place given to theology: His Sumatra was laid out in distinct units – divided according to chapters that dwelt singularly on the various ethnic groups and their respective political economies – and organised in a grid-like manner where the flora and fauna, animal life, mineral deposits and local economic practices were carefully laid out for scrutiny. Seventeenth-century writers like Walter Raleigh may have tried to connect the whole of Asia to the land of Eden and find the precise location where the tree of Paradise took root, but in

of a country they must have regarded with an evil eye' (pp. i-ii). Marsden's own eye was trained upon the lay of the land, and his work begins with a general outline of the geography of Sumatra (chapter 1). The second chapter gives an account of the people of Sumatra, and Marsden notes that the island was home to very different ethnic groups and communities, with their particular customs, beliefs, languages and social classes (pp. 42-47). Chapters 4, 5 and 6 dwell on the diet, system of agriculture and the flora and fauna of the island, where Marsden goes into great detail to account for the various kinds of plant life and trees, and their daily commercial uses (pp. 54-96). The 'offensive Durian' is mentioned in chapter 7, which focuses on the fruits found on the island (p. 98), while the next chapter looks at the various species of wildlife and domesticated animals that are to be found. Chapter 9 considers the local agrarian economy of Sumatra, and what kinds of vegetation and plants are traded by the local inhabitants, while the next elaborates on the subject of tin and gold mining (pp. 165-177). Chapter 11 gives an account of the laws of the land, and the different legal systems and punishments found in the different communities (pp. 217-255). Marsden notes that 'the Sumatrans, and more particularly, the Malays, are much attached, in common with many other eastern people; to the custom of smoking opium' (p. 277), which must have resonated with the board of directors of the East India Company that was beginning to corner the opium monopoly in Asia. Later in the work he devotes an entire chapter on the 'Malay Kingdom of Menangkabau (Minangkabau)' (pp. 325-352), and another on Siak (pp. 353-364). The Battas (Bataks) are discussed in detail in the following chapter (pp. 365-395), and it is in this chapter that Marsden mentions 'the extraordinary custom of the Battas', which was cannibalism (pp. 390-391) – that was practised as a form of punishment and 'as a mode of shewing their detestation of certain crimes' (p. 391). The final chapter gives an account of the Kingdom of Achin (Aceh) (pp. 396-479). It should be noted that Marsden confined his study to Sumatra only, and wrote little about Sumatra's long historical connection with Java, the Malay Peninsula, the rest of the archipelago and India. In this regard, his narrow focus seemed typical of the works that were produced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for the notion of an interconnected Southeast Asia had yet to emerge.

Marsden's account of Sumatra it was the Durian tree that mattered,[69] along with other native plant life that could be put to economic use and traded as commodities. At the hands of the company men, Southeast Asia was beginning to emerge as something new: a market.

2.d From Nightmare to Knowledge: Coming to *Know* Southeast Asia

To return whence we began, it should not be a surprise to anyone that Thomas de Quincey was haunted by his vision of the nameless Malay from nowhere and the colossal landscapes of Asia that overwhelmed his frail sensibility. By his time, Asia meant different things to different people; from the ethnography of Boemus to the graphic (and at times explicit) accounts of Pigafetta to the biblical recounting of Asia's history in the writings of Raleigh; and it was clear that there was never a singular or fixed notion of Asia or the region that would later come to be known as *Southeast Asia*. Lauded and envied as the land of gold since the time of Ptolemy and – by the sixteenth century – coveted as the home of the legendary spice islands, the Southeast Asian archipelago had inspired successive generations of travellers, navigators and historians in the West, who showered upon the region a myriad of accounts that titillated and aroused the interest of many, and also provided the stuff of nightmares for some.

Yet despite the long and enduring interest in that faraway land, the Western powers were unable to impress upon the peoples and lands of the archipelago an order of knowledge and power that was arresting. Southeast Asia had yet to come into its own, to become a *thing-in-itself*, distinct, particular and unique. The maps of the region that had been produced since the time of Munster, Magini and Mercator referred to it as *India extra Gangem* (India beyond the Ganges) or *Greater India* (which was a region so vast and indefinite that it included everything from Afghanistan to Vietnam). For three centuries, Europeans had been in contact with the people of Southeast Asia; travelling and exploring that part of the world, engaged in trade with local polities and setting up commercial bases and trading posts across the archipelago. For much of this period the European powers – British, Dutch, French, Spanish and Portuguese – had learned to coexist with local Malay, Sumatran, Javanese, Bugis, Dayak, Burmese, Thai, Cambodian, Lao and Vietnamese communities who tolerated their

69 Ibid., 98.

presence and complied with their request for trade as long as the former did not jeopardize the sovereignty and freedom of the latter. That this commensurable state of affairs could be maintained for so long had more to do with the relatively equal balance of power between East and West than upon goodwill or kind intentions: The Portuguese, after their difficult experience of trying to bring down the Kingdom of Malacca in 1511, admitted that Southeast Asian powers were more than a match for them; and noted that the guns of Malacca were as good as the guns made in Gottingen, Germany, at the time.

But the balance of power would tip in favour of the West by the late eighteenth century. Again, the cause of this shift in power relations was grounded in political economy and was the result of the changes and developments that took place in Western Europe as the age of sail gave way to the age of steam, bringing with it the industrial and scientific revolutions that would lead to the emergence of new knowledge-systems, new epistemologies and new ways of looking at the world. The rise of the hard sciences ended Europe's long night of the dark ages, and diseases would soon be defeated with modern medicine and the microscope. Witches, sorcery and black magic became the stuff of legend and fairy tales.

With the coming of the age of industry came other innovations that would alter the face of warfare, too: The gunboat, the rifled musket, the rocket and other modern weapons would come into service in the 1800s, and were initially intended to be used in the Western theatre of war – Napoleon had sought to use them for his invasion of Britain. But such technology would be used with greater effect in Asia and Africa; and with technological-military leverage on their side, the Western powers could finally penetrate, dominate and secure vast areas of space – both terrestrial and maritime – in Southeast Asia. With that capability to obtain and hold space came the capability to know, classify and understand the peoples and objects of the region they had been engaging with for so long.

It was this process of conquering and colonising the lands and seas of Southeast Asia that contributed, in stages, to its emergence and development as a region with an identity of its own. The means to do so were provided by the workings of colonial-capitalism, that brought with it a train of new knowledge-systems (such as the theory of racial difference) that allowed the Western powers to – momentarily – arrest the socio-economic-cultural dynamic of a region that had been fluid and porous for centuries.[70] Upon the lands, seas and people of Southeast Asia the nebulous idea of Southeast Asia

70 Chaudhuri, *Asia before Europe;* Edwardes, *Asia in the European Age*.

was eventually imposed through the delineation of borders, the policing of frontiers, the laying down of new investigative modalities and knowledge-structures. And as this process developed throughout the nineteenth century, the people and the region of Southeast Asia would be objectified and brought into the columbarium of ideas, tropes and themes that made up the body of knowledge of the region. This was a body of knowledge that was in many respects self-referential and whose epistemic claims were evaluated by a measure that was not of the people of Southeast Asia. The scene was set, the props were ready and the nineteenth century was about to descend upon them.

3 The New Language-Game of Modern Colonial Capitalism

Gentlemen, that's the future. What a fascinating modern age we live in.
– Captain Jack Aubrey, *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* (2003, dir. Peter Weir)

3.a Racialised Colonial-Capitalism as the New Language-Game of the Nineteenth Century

Proposition 23. New types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence and others become obsolete and forgotten.[1]
– Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (1945)

In the beginning of languages, it was necessary to have the idea before one gave it a name; and so it is still, where, making a new complex idea, one also, by giving it a new name, makes a new word. (3.5.xv)
– John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689)

Today's reader may recoil at the language used by some of the writers of the colonial era. In the course of my work as a lecturer who teaches the history, society and politics of Southeast Asia, there have been occasions when I have had to remind my students that the books on their reading list contain language that may seem somewhat alien to them – though that is not an excuse not to read such works. That some may balk at the idea of reading such writers is understandable, considering the sensibilities we share today – though I, for one, do not share the sentiments of those who argue for 'trigger warnings' to be pasted on book covers. Yet one is seldom prepared to read of how the Malays, Javanese and Filipinos were summarily written off as lazy natives,[2] of how the Chinese in Java were referred to as *bloedzuigers* ('bloodsuckers') by Dutch colonial administrators,[3] and of how some of these colonial writers were

1 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*.

2 See Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*.

3 'Sedert wanneer is het Gouvernement zoo anti-Chineesch geworden?', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* (1857), part 1, 168-171 (quoted in Lohanda, *Growing Pains*, 23n3).

convinced of the biological inferiority of Asians, whom they thought were on the verge of degeneration and extinction thanks to their own inherited genetic deficiencies. By today's standards of political correctness, any social scientist with the temerity to pen such ideas would probably be hounded out of academia.

But the point is that such books were *not* written today, and that they were works that emerged in the age of empire; and we should not forget that what constituted academic and scientific writing in the nineteenth century was very different from our own understanding of it now.

The works that I propose to look at were written by men who worked for the East India Company, or had worked for it, or who were members of state organisations and institutions whose interests were aligned to the company's. They were *all* men, and they were *modern* men to boot. They lived at a time when theories of racial difference and eugenics abounded, and the likes of Francis Galton were regarded as eminent men of learning. We should also not forget the specificity of the nineteenth century, and the fact that the language used during that period was informed by discoveries and developments that emerged only recently, and which were very different in turn from the languages that were in use before.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, up to the eighteenth century Asia was configured and understood according to a range of registers that were quite different from those of the century after: de Bry and Raleigh struggled in their own ways to reconcile the discoveries made by navigators and geographers with their religious worldview that had been passed down from Old Testament sources. And if the modern reader today is offended by the blatantly racist tone taken by writers on Asia of the nineteenth century, then whatever offence taken would probably be amplified when reading the writings of men like Antonio Pigafetta, whose account of Magellan's voyage to the Southeast Asian archipelago – not long after the Crusades and the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain – was full of boast and blather about how many Muslim villages and settlements were put to the torch as the Spaniards burned their way across the archipelago. These men were products of the age they lived in, and their writings demonstrated the common sensibilities of their time. Pigafetta, de Bry and Raleigh wrote for an audience back home in Europe, which was then still defined by their common religious identity and sense of mission and purpose – Pigafetta's hagiographic and syrupy account of Magellan's voyage was, after all, dedicated to the Grand Master of the Order of the Knights of Rhodes, and no concessions were made to the lachrymose sensibilities of present-day graduate students or lay readers.

These shifts and changes, from one register of meaning to another, signal the rise and fall of what Ludwig Wittgenstein termed 'language-games'.[4] As Wittgenstein had argued in his *Philosophical Investigations*, the working of language cannot be understood in a non-historical, extra-contextual manner. Languages exist, but in the way they are utilised for everyday purposes they follow different sets of rules in the same way that games differ from each other by virtue of the different sets of rules that identify them. Football and rugby both employ the use of balls, but the balls are used in different ways. To play football entails a knowledge and understanding of the rules of football; and in the same way to lie, to joke, to be sarcastic entails knowledge of the rules of lying, joking and being sarcastic. All of these things can be done with the same language – English, for instance – but the use of the same language (English) when lying, telling jokes and being sarcastic involve following different rules of language-use, hence the Wittgensteinian term 'language-games'.

The writings of Pigafetta, de Bry, Raleigh et al. demonstrated the workings of a particular set of rules that were the norm up to the eighteenth century. And these rules were generally accepted by a society that shared common beliefs and a value system that defined Europe for what it was then. The changes that would take place in Europe – most notably secularisation, industrialisation and the scientific revolution – would in time give birth to a different society where different values, epistemologies and language-games arose.

Industrialisation and the scientific revolution also tipped the balance of power between East and West in favour of the latter. Magellan's expedition to the East Indies in 1519 took three years to complete, and only 18 of the 270 who set out on the fateful journey made it back alive. By the 1800s, Western economic and military power had come together to augment the capabilities of Western trading companies and states to reach out as far as Southeast Asia and to affect the socio-political-economic changes that were taking place there. If Arab, Indian and Chinese civilisations once led the world in medicine, engineering and philosophy, that advantage was well and truly lost by the nineteenth century. Consider the speed with which European military power developed in the nineteenth century, for starters: The introduction of the technique of rifling smooth-bore muskets gave rise to the modern rifle, which was put to use during the Napoleonic Wars in the Peninsular Campaign in Spain and Portugal, but which would later be used in the colonial wars across Asia and Africa,

4 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*.

too. The invention of volley guns (such as the mitrailleuse) would lead to the unveiling of the modern machine-gun – eventually perfected by Richard Jordan Gatling and Hiram Maxim – and would herald the arrival of large-scale colonial battles where entire native armies could be gunned down *en masse*, rendering traditional native notions of bravado and invulnerability redundant overnight. The first seaworthy steamship would make its appearance with Richard Wright's *SS Experiment* in 1813, and the modern steam-powered gunboat would extend the West's capability to project and deliver power along coastlines and up the rivers of Africa and Asia – from the Opium War to the Indian Revolt and all across Southeast Asia, such as during the three successive Anglo-Burmese Wars of 1824-1826, 1852 and 1885-1886 and the pacification of the coast of Borneo in the 1840s.

These developments were real in material terms, and substantial in their impact upon Western notions of identity vis-à-vis the Other. If the early European travellers had marvelled at the opulence and wealth of the East Indies in the past, that feeling of reverence and awe was soon to be lost by the nineteenth century and replaced by a new sense of self-confidence that later burgeoned to the level of arrogance.

It was in that setting – the nineteenth century, with its trappings of scientific progress, newfound military might, nationalist pride and (secular) missionary zeal – that a new 'language-game' emerged, and with that a new way of looking at Southeast Asia, understanding it, describing it, codifying and categorising it, mapping it and ultimately *knowing* it.

This is not to suggest that the writers and explorers of the past did not know Southeast Asia or were entirely mistaken in their gaze, but it is to argue that from the nineteenth century onwards a new comprehension of Southeast Asia was about to be put together, under the auspices of the ideology and praxis of racialised colonial-capitalism that sought to reappropriate and represent Southeast Asia as something rather different from what was hitherto known. And as Southeast Asia – along with the rest of Asia – was brought into a new dialectical relationship with a Western world that saw itself as necessarily and essentially modern, scientific and civilised, it logically followed that the Southeast Asia it encountered had to be its corollary opposite: It was in the nineteenth century that Southeast Asia came to be 'uncivilised'.

3.b Headhunters, Cannibals and Pirates: *Othering* Southeast Asia

> What shall become of us without any barbarians? Those people were some kind of solution.
>
> – Constantine P. Cavafy, 'Waiting for the Barbarians' (1904)

Barbarians are not born, but invented. And it was during the nineteenth century, when the combined military-economic power of the European colonial companies was at its height, that the reinvention of Southeast Asia as a land of barbarism, chaos and exoticism reached its zenith, coinciding with the decline of native power.

Cohn has noted that the theme of Asiatic 'despotism' and 'chaos' would come to dominate the thinking and writing of East India Company officials like Alexander Dow, who needed a justification for colonial intervention in native Indian affairs. The idea of native despotism would serve as one of the many justifications for both military intervention and colonial rule from India to Southeast Asia, as the company represented itself as the saviour that had arrived to rescue the natives from themselves and their misrule.[5] Though the Compagnie française pour le commerce des Indes orientales would be declared bankrupt in 1794, and the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) would be all but defunct by 1799, the secular, market-driven, managerial mindset that had been put in place by these companies would set the tone for much of the nineteenth century. This was particularly true in the case of the territories that came under the control of the British East India Company, for the EIC would remain active up to 1874 and was destined to outlive its European competitors by three-quarters of a century.

By the nineteenth century the world had shrunk further thanks to the development of the communicative architecture that had been laid down by the companies that ventured to Africa, Asia and South America in search of profit, products and markets. Developments in ship-building meant that more goods and peoples could be moved around the globe, which also meant that hitherto remote parts of the planet were about to be rendered *known* and *knowable* by those who had the means to voyage there. This did not mean that hundreds of thousands of Europeans suddenly scrambled to the East, for as Bosma has noted, the actual number of Europeans living and working in the overseas trading centres and colonies

5 Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, 62-65.

remained relatively small.[6] But it did mean that the European state had grown more sophisticated in its application and exercise of power, and that it now possessed the means to regulate not only trade but other aspects of socio-cultural-political life that were changing as a result of the growth in trade with the overseas colonies.

The growth of Western state power and the capability of governments to monitor and control trading activities abroad was partly the result of the modalities of trade then: The East India Company, like the Dutch East Indies Company and the Compagnie française pour le commerce des Indes orientales, had grown increasingly powerful over the years, and by the eighteenth to nineteenth century was regarded as one of the main engines of national wealth. The company was a militarised commercial entity whose economic concerns went hand-in-hand with its military-strategic concerns. As a company authorised to seize lands and control territories, it operated according to its own logic that conflated territorial expansion with economic success; and developed to become both a financial as well as military-naval power. This power was both material-economic as well as epistemic, for the East India Company – like the Dutch and French companies – *viewed the world in terms of markets that had to be conquered in order to be rendered productive*. As such, the officials and officers of the company had a more complex view of the world around them: Foreign lands were not merely seen as landscapes but also as territories to be conquered, and seas and oceans were more than bodies of water with fish swimming in them but were regarded as watery battlefields and vectors for power-projection.

Here was an instance of epistemic power, where knowing the world meant being able to define the world. But despite their ever-growing military-economic power the companies had come under scrutiny thanks to the manner that they conducted their activities abroad, some of which skirted the fine line between legality and illegality: It was well known that many company officials had grown spectacularly rich as a result of the looting of wealth overseas, and, as Milton has noted, the East India

6 Ulbe Bosma has noted the important fact that up to the nineteenth century 'the European presence in Asia continued to be modest. In the early nineteenth century, far more British people went to the West Indies than to Asia. European settlements in Asia were almost negligible compared to those in the New World. In British India, they involved at best 3,550 state employees, including naval military personnel, and 2,149 private settlers. (These figures do not include wives and children.) The equivalent figures for Java amount to about 2,700 Dutch state employees and private settlers in 1819. In addition, about 30,000 British military personnel were stationed in British India and 7,000 military personnel of the Dutch colonial army in Indonesia' (Bosma, 'Emigration').

Company was notorious for the corruption among its merchants, some of whom had used their own savings to engage in private trade abroad in places like India, the East Indies and Japan, while utilising company ships and storage facilities.[7]

The laws that were passed in the Parliament of England – like the laws passed in Holland – were intended to remind the merchants that these mottled enterprises were *national* companies that served the exclusive interests of their respective nations. The expansion of the domain of law, both national and extra-territorial, would continue throughout the nineteenth century as the governments of Europe sought to harness the power of industry and commerce to expand their own power at home and abroad. In 1803 the 'Act to amend fo much of an Act made in the Seventh year of the Reign of His late Majefty King George the Firft, intituled, An Act for the Further Preventing His Majefty's Subjects from Trading to the Eaft Indies under foreign Commiffions' was passed, regulating and controlling the activities of British merchants and seamen who operated in the East Indies; emphasising, yet again, that the company existed to serve the interests of the *British* nation, and that those who worked for the company remained British subjects wherever they might be on the planet.[8]

But the laws that were being passed then were not merely focused on the activities of Europeans who were trading in the Indies: The global trading network that had been created by the East India Company, the Dutch East Indies Company and the Compagnie française pour le commerce des Indes orientales also meant that goods from as far away as India and Southeast Asia were now being exported back to Europe, which created new opportunity structures for state surveillance, policing and control. To the dismay of the dandies of London, in 1814 the 'Act for Inpofing an Excife Duty on Silk Handkerchiefs fold by the Eaft India Company for Home Confunmtion' was passed, which not only regulated the importation of silk handkerchiefs back to England, but even went as far as setting a limit on the number of

7 Milton, *Samurai William*, 302-303.

8 Parliament of England, *An Act to Amend fo Much of an Act*. This 1803 act for the regulation of English pilots sailing to the East Indies further augmented the power of the Crown and the authorities to punish those English merchants who had been working with, trading with and sailing on other non-English vessels operating in the East Indies. The act stated that 'if any pilot belonging to the faid Society or Fellowship of Pilots fhall hereafter, contrary to fuch Rules and Orders aforesaid, refufe or neglect, upon being duly warned of that Purpose, to take charge of, and to navigate and conduct any Ship or Vessel' (p. 3) that was not sailing under the flag of the crown of England, then the pilots and sailors would have their goods and properties confiscated upon their return to England, and be prevented from undertaking such journeys in the future.

handkerchiefs that a lady or gentleman could have on her or his person at any time, and how many handkerchiefs a person could keep at home.[9]

Colonial-capitalism was thus a boon to the European state in two ways: It not only expanded the state's power abroad, but it also provided the opportunities for greater state control back home.[10] All of this was happening at time when the modern European world of the nineteenth century was being introduced to a range of new technologies, epistemologies and sciences that contributed in no small way to the manner in which European identity was being re-configured in relation to its *constitutive Other*. Southeast Asia – like the rest of Asia by extension – figured prominently as the constitutive Other to the West by the nineteenth century, and as European power grew across the Southeast Asian archipelago, the distinction between West and East become more pronounced.

Underlying this distinction was the growing belief that there was a real difference between Europeans and non-Europeans, a belief that would later be bolstered by the latest trends in both the social sciences and hard sciences. Notwithstanding the fact that Toussaint L'Ouverture (d. 1803) had led the Haitian revolution, and that Guadeloupe-born Joseph Bologne

9 Parliament of England, *An Act for Inpofing an Excife Duty*. This 1814 act for imposing duties upon silk handkerchiefs sold back in England by the merchants of the East India Company was wide in its scope: It regulated all silk handkerchiefs that were being exported from the East Indies back to England, and imposed a general duty of 25 percent of the sale price of such items, to be paid within forty days after their sale, both to private clients as well as retailers. Stamps were to be provided to denote the payment of duties, and no silk handkerchief was allowed to leave the dockyard warehouses, on the penalty of 50 percent of their market price *and* the forfeiture of the entire stock. The penalty for counterfeiting the duty stamps was equally heavy, which was a fine of 500 pounds *and* the forfeiting of the stock as well. Any person found using, carrying or trying to conceal any silk handkerchief that had not been taxed would have the item 'seized by any officer of Excife' (p. 5). The scope of the act extended into the private domain as well, for even those who were not merchants of the East India Company were affected: 'Perfons in whofe custody or poffeffion Three pieces upwards of Silk Handkerchiefs, or any Silk Handkerchiefs exceeding the number of twenty-one Silk Handkerchiefs fhall be difcovered or found, fhall be deemed and taken to be a Trader and Dealer of Silk Handkerchiefs within the meaning of this Act' (p. 6), and thus liable to penalties. The act specifically stated that all earnings – from both duties and fines imposed – would 'be paid to the Receipt of His Majefty's Exchequer at Weftminfter, and the faid monies fhall be carried to, and made part of, the Fund called the Confolidated Fund of Great Britain' (p. 9).

10 Cohn has noted that 'from the eighteenth century onward, European states increasingly made their power visible not only through ritual performance and dramatic display, but through the gradual extension of "officialising" procedures that established and extended their capacity in many areas… The process of state building in Great Britain, seen as a cultural project, was closely linked to its emergence as an imperial power' (Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, 3).

Chevalier de Saint-Georges (d. 1799) had conducted a symphony orchestra in Paris[11] or the fame attached to the writer Alexandre Dumas (d. 1870), the nineteenth century was a time when slavery was still practised in the Western world, notably in the antebellum South of the United States, and was a time when pseudo-scientific theories of racial difference flourished. Scholars such as James Pritchard (*On the Extinction of Primitive Races*, 1839), Robert Knox (*The Races of Men*, 1850) and Benjamin Kidd (*Social Evolution*, 1894) theorised at length about how and why non-white people belonged to different races that were apart from Europeans, and put forth a plethora of theories that argued that the non-Western races were the outcome of different evolutionary paths – the so-called theory of *polygenesis*. Such ideas of racial difference, based though they were on the flimsiest theories that the pseudo-sciences of the time could furnish, nonetheless found their way into the official policy-papers, public laws, commercial praxis and institutional norms of the era: When the state of Oregon was admitted into the Union in 1859, its constitution forbade coloured people from settling, living and owning property there, and this was justified on the grounds that Oregon was meant to be a virgin state where a new, ideal society was meant to be created – and that ideal society was coloured white.[12]

Theories of racial difference gained support from those who were actively involved in the transatlantic slave trade, and whose interests lay in the perpetuation of the slavery-based agricultural economy of the American South; but the case of the East Indies was somewhat different. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Europe's initial encounter with Southeast Asia was accompanied by a sense of begrudging respect for the cosmopolitan communities and thriving commercial centres that they discovered. Even the pious de Bry was unable to summarily dismiss the peoples of Southeast Asia as backward, for it was impossible to deny that the region had already developed its own network of trading centres that were a match for Europe anytime.

The balance of scientific, military and economic power had, however, shifted in favour of the West by the nineteenth century; and it was this that allowed the West to review its earlier regard of the East and to apply these new theories to the people and cultures of Southeast Asia, as they sought to redefine themselves at the same time. The company, which was the instrument through which the Western powers first gained a foothold in Southeast Asia between the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, was not

11 Banat, *The Chevalier de Saint-Georges*.

12 Kopp, *Eden within Eden*.

merely a conduit for commerce, but also the means through which power and knowledge could be projected to distant lands. And accompanying the train of commercial calculations that informed the work of the company was a host of new ideas and theories that would be put to work in the service of colonial-capitalism, too. These were the *investigative modalities* that Cohn referred to in his study of colonial knowledge and power in India, through which the production of useable and *instrumental knowledge* in the form of published reports, statistical returns, official proceedings, administrative histories and legal codes was accomplished.[13]

In due course pseudo-scientific instruments like ethnographic studies and the population census were introduced to the new company-ruled commercial centres and outposts across the archipelago. Alongside the claims of the architects of empire, the Eurocentric theory of racial difference added scientific credibility and justification to the policy of divide and rule that was being implemented in the colonies.[14] Studies of native Southeast Asian characteristics and cultural practices were used to provide a justification for the paternalistic attitude towards the soon-to-be colonised subjects. Native Southeast Asian cultural traits such as *amok, latah* and others were studied and documented, with emphasis on the more sensational aspects of such phenomena.[15] Perhaps the most radical expression of this emerging

13 Dirks, 'Foreword', xiii.

14 As Lenore Manderson notes in her study on race, colonial mentality and public health policies in colonial Malaya, by the nineteenth century the dominant belief was that the superior status of Europeans in the tropics could only be safeguarded by measures that ensured that their contact with the natives and their environment would be kept to a minimum. The alleged backwardness of the natives was blamed on both genetic and environmental factors and this justified the creation of exclusive retreats and spas in the cooler highlands (such as in Penang Hill, Frasers Hill and Cameron Highlands), exclusive clubs for Europeans and segregated residential areas where the European settlers would not be contaminated by the deleterious lifestyle, infections and traits of other native races. Conversely, the squalid condition of native settlements (in particular the crowded and hazardous urban squatter areas and slums of the Chinese) were regarded as symptoms of the native character (Manderson, 'Race, Colonial Mentality and Public Health in Early Twentieth Century Malaya', 198. 202).

15 Winzeler notes that the Malay phenomena of *amok* and *latah* have been reported and discussed at length for more than five centuries and that it had always featured in European studies of the Malay character as a whole. Such behavioural phenomena 'fascinated Europeans partly because it appeared to involve the inversion of usual Malay norms of behaviour which emphasised dignity and control' (Winzeler, 'Malayan *Amok* and *Latah* as "History Bound" Syndromes', 214). Alatas, however, notes that the real obsession with *amok* and *latah* stemmed from the Western belief in the underlying weakness of character of non-European races in general. The colonial administrators who wrote on *latah* and *amok* were neither social scientists nor practitioners of medicine. Nonetheless in their writings they argued that the traumatic changes to Malay society brought about by the colonial encounter had further weakened the

distinction between Europeans and Asians came in the form of the theory of native auto-genocide, which argued that the weaker, inferior races would eventually die away in the face of progress and modernity brought about by (Western) development.[16] Such studies were also used to further entrench the belief that Southeast Asians in general were culturally and biologically inferior to Europeans due to their feeble character. The stereotype of the unreliable native was developed in a number spheres: from Orientalist literature to serious academic studies, from the field of health and welfare to urban planning. So pervasive and influential were the beliefs regarding the culturally and environmentally-determined defects of the Southeast Asians that they would endure even up to the postcolonial era in the perceptions of Europeans and Asians alike.[17]

The chapters that follow will look at the works that were written during this period – the nineteenth century – by a range of authors who were themselves members of the company, or attached to it and its concerns in one way or another. We will attempt a close reading of the texts themselves and endeavour to demonstrate how, text by text, the *idea* of the entity later known as Southeast Asia and the countries that comprise it was slowly developed in stages; and how the lands and peoples of Southeast Asia were framed, fixed and rendered knowable by the authors whose knowledge of the East Indies was intended to serve the ends of the company and government they served. This was an instance of instrumental knowledge being produced through a range of investigative and analytical modalities that was intended to provide the justification for intervention and eventual colonisation of foreign lands; and as the *idea* of Southeast Asia was the result of instrumental knowledge put to work in the service of empire, it could also be said that Southeast Asia was *invented* as it was discovered as well.

Malay character, and they believed that the best way of 'protecting' the Malays was by adopting a paternalistic attitude towards them (Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, pp. 43-52, 61-70, 83-98.

16 Brantlinger, 'Dying Races'.

17 European social scientists and academics would still be lamenting the fate of the 'disabled' Malays as late as 1960. In a survey for the Fabian Society, the socialist thinker John Lowe described the Malays as 'an unsophisticated, technically underdeveloped rural people, while the Malayan Chinese are technically resourceful and economically energetic' (Lowe, *The Malayan Experiment*, 1). As far as the Malay race was concerned, Lowe's condemnation of them was a blanket one: 'The mass of the Malay peasantry are traditionalist, suspicious and often superstitious, offering formidable resistance to change' (p. 22). Lowe also suggested that as a former colonial power that still wielded enormous influence in the fledgling independent state, Britain should make an effort to promote secular modernising trends in the former colony and that 'British business should take care not to encourage and support traditionalist elements or local vested interests against modernising movements' (p. 37).

4 Raffles' Java as Museum

> The census, the map, and the museum: together, they profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion – the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry.[1]
> – Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1983)

4.a *Knowing* Java and *Preserving* Java: Thomas Stamford Raffles' Great Venture

> I believe there is no one possessed of more information respecting Java than myself.[2]
> – Stamford Raffles, in a letter to Elton Hammond (1813)

> Proposition 18: 'I know' often means: I have the proper grounds for my statement. So if the other person is acquainted with the language-game, he would admit that I know.
> – Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (1969)

Thomas Stamford Raffles' work *The History of Java* was published in London in 1817.[3] It was, at the time, the most outstanding work of its kind in the English language, far surpassing the earlier account of Java that had been published by John Stockdale in 1812[4] and the work on Sumatra by the great doyen of East Indian studies William Marsden.[5] Accompanied by a set of outstanding coloured plates of the natives of Java rendered by William Daniell, and an extraordinarily detailed map of Java by J. Walker, Raffles' *History of Java* – standing proudly as a hefty two-volume set – was destined, as John Bastin notes, to be 'one of the classics of Southeast Asian historiography'[6] – despite the fact that the term 'Southeast Asia' had not even been coined then.

The History of Java was written and published only *after* Britain's brief occupation of Java had come to an end. The circumstances that led to the

1 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 163-164.
2 Quoted in Raffles, *Memoir of the Life*, 195.
3 Raffles, *The History of Java*.
4 Stockdale, *Sketches, Civil and Military*.
5 Marsden, *The History of Sumatra* (1783).
6 Bastin, 'Foreword', vii.

invasion and occupation of Java – by the East India Company and British forces – were complex, and reveal how Southeast Asia was already by then drawn into the web of geopolitical rivalry that emanated from the power centres of Europe.

By 1811 – the year of the British invasion – the Dutch had been in Java for more than two centuries. The Dutch had arrived there in 1610, led by Governor Bolt; and by 1621 they had established their foothold in Jayakarta (Jakarta), which they subsequently renamed Batavia.[7] Throughout the eighteenth century the British and the Dutch were bitter rivals as they sought to monopolise the production and export of spices from the East Indies back to Europe, and the British were unable to hold on to their trading bases in the Spice Islands. The advent of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe, however, led to a sudden change in Britain's fortunes as Holland came under the rule of Napoleon, which instantaneously meant that Java was now part of Napoleon's empire, and thus posed a strategic threat to the British presence in places like Penang and India.

The East India Company, wary of its own position and vulnerability in India and the East Indies, lobbied for a military expedition to be sent to Java to neutralise the combined Dutch-French threat. But this was happening at a time when Napoleon's star was rising in the European continent, and Britain was in short supply of allies – even the American press was showing signs of partisanship, with several prominent American newspapers showing sympathy for France rather than Britain.[8] Invading parts of Southeast Asia was not, by then, something novel for the company. Half a century earlier the East India Company had been involved in the invasion and occupation of Manila, and that also took place against the

7 Raffles, *The History of Java*, xxv-xxvi.

8 By 1811 the American press was running articles that were sympathetic to Napoleon's cause. The Boston-based broadsheet *The Repertory*, for instance, featured the entire speech by Napoleon where Napoleon insisted that France had made appeals to Britain to end the conflict between them, and that France had no choice but to impose a blockade on Britain and to prevent any commercial exchange between that country and other nations. In the same speech Napoleon had also warned that American ships would not be allowed to trade in the continent if they had any commercial dealings with Britain ('Latest from France'). Other American papers had shown support for the new trade restrictions that the United States had placed on British goods, such as the *National Intelligencer*, and earlier the same paper had reported that President Madison had approved the appropriations made by Congress for the re-fitting and rearmament of the US navy and army, in preparation for war ('An Act Making Appropriations for the Support of the Military Establishment of the United States').

backdrop of another conflict – the Seven Years' War – back in continental Europe.[9]

Prior to Britain's invasion of Java the British public was in the dark about the goings-on there. The few reports that found their way back to England painted a somewhat bleak picture of the place, with one account lamenting the poor standard of amenities in Batavia and even claiming that there were few competent doctors to be found.[10] Hardly any British explorers or cartographers had been given permission by the Dutch to survey the land – something that Raffles himself bemoaned in his work[11] – and consequently British knowledge of the lay of the land in Java was poor.

Having assembled the fleet – with troops that were sent from Bengal to Penang – the combined forces of the East India Company and the British navy made their way to the island of Java. Britain's invasion took place on 4 August 1811 when the troops under the command of Rear Admiral Sir Robert Stopford, Sir Samuel Auchmuty and Lord Minto attacked Batavia

9 As a consequence of the Seven Years' War in Europe, Britain declared war on Spain, which was allied to France. In 1762 Britain attacked the Spanish outposts in the West and East Indies, and the invasion of the Philippines was led by Colonel (later Lieutenant-General) Sir William Draper and Vice-Admiral Samuel Cornish, who were in command of East India troops and ships based in Madras, India. The British fleet was first assembled in India, and then it went on to Malacca, after which it moved on to Manila, which was attacked on 24 September 1762. The occupation of Manila lasted for two years, with Dawsonne Drake of the East India Company serving as Britain's first and only governor of Manila. The occupation finally ended in April 1764 with the troops and ships of the East India Company and British navy returning to India and England. Prior to the invasion and during the occupation of Manila, the British press were full of reports about the economic and political advantages of the invasion of the Philippines, the primary aim then being the weakening of Spain and the ruin of its commercial empire. But despite the enthusiasm shown, the occupation ended with the cessation of hostilities back in Europe, and Britain was compelled to return Manila to Spain by the terms of the Treaty of Paris. Some of the leaders of the Manila expedition would later fall victim to politics and scandal: Dawsonne Drake was later accused of corruption and abuse of power while he served as governor of Manila, and would be recalled back to London by the East India Company and demoted. By the end of his career, William Draper would be accused of misconduct by a military court. See chapters 1-3 ('Invasion of the Philippines Designed', 'Description of Those Islands and Manila' and 'Capitulation: General Draper Returns') in *The Annual Register*.

10 In 'Voyage to Batavia', an account published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1808, the author described the state of Batavia in a disparaging manner. The ship had been struck by some unknown fever, and members of the crew and passengers began to wither away. Upon arrival at Batavia, the Englishmen asked for help from the Dutch, and the report continues: 'The Dutchman came, and upon examination he pronounced that he was acquainted with the disease, but knew no mode of cure; in short, he recommended opium to make death easy. So much for medical help; and in the whole city of Batavia, as I learned afterwards, there was but one Physician who deserved the name!' ('Voyage to Batavia', 221-222).

11 Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 2, ch. 9, p. 6.

– then under the control of the Dutch governor, Jansens. By all accounts the opening assault of Batavia – which was focused on the military precinct of Meester Cornelis (Jatinegara) – was a bloody affair. Dutch casualties were high, and the corpses of the slain defenders were dumped in a swamp later referred to as *rowo bankei* – the swamp of corpses.[12] It should be noted that even before Java was invaded by the force assembled by Stopford, Auchmuty and Minto, British ships were already blasting away at French and Dutch ships the year before, turning the Java Sea into their watery battleground.[13] Batavia fell on the 8th, but the fighting continued throughout the month until the Dutch and their French allies were pushed back into the interior and began their retreat to the east of the country. Lord Minto (Gilbert Eliot, Earl of Minto, commander-in-chief of the East India forces and governor-general of India), consolidated his forces in Batavia and used it as the base for British operations that were to follow.

Lord Minto's stay in Java, however, was not long; and in a matter of months he returned to India, after appointing the young Thomas Stamford Raffles as the first lieutenant-governor of the island[14] – in the same way that the company man Dawsonne Drake had been appointed as the governor of Manila during Britain's occupation there in 1762-1764. Over the next six years, Raffles was left in charge of Java and its dependencies, and it was during this period that he, along with fellow administrators of the East India Company such as John Crawfurd and commanders of the British army and navy, extended British rule across the island and further across the archipelago.

Stamford Raffles, however, was a relatively unknown personality back in England then. Having slowly risen up the ranks of the East India Company, his origins were humble and ordinary. He had joined the East India Company at the age of fourteen, taught himself French, and was first sent to Penang to serve as the assistant secretary of the island's governor, Philip Dundas. The British press, while reporting on events in India and

12 Interview with Peter Carey, Jakarta, 6 February 2016.

13 In 1810 the British sloop *Prometheus* reported that it has attacked the French privateer *Messilina* off the coast of Pelew (Palau), and in the same year a combined force of British marines and coastal artillery unit of the East India Company managed to storm the fortifications of Victoria, Ambon, resulting in the defeat the Dutch-Madurese garrison that was defending the fort. The despatch of Admiral Drury – then commander of forces in the East Indies – included the report by Captain Tucker, who took part in the attack and subsequent capture of Victoria and the whole of Amboyna, which noted that British losses in the attack 'were trifling' ('Letters from the East Indies', 361, 366-368).

14 Minto, *Lord Minto in India*.

Java, seemed more interested in accounts of British heroism and gallantry abroad rather than the opinions and ambitions of junior functionaries of the East India Company.[15] Even the poet-philologist and naturalist Dr John Leyden – who was a close friend of Raffles and who had been roped into the Java expedition by his mentor Lord Minto – was better known and esteemed than Raffles; and his sudden death – due to 'Batavian fever' – earned Leyden lengthy praise and mournful obituaries in publications like the *Bombay Courier* and the *London Chronicle* in 1812. (General John Malcolm even dedicated a poem to Leyden's untimely passing in Batavia.[16])

Raffles probably realised that his promotion to the rank of lieutenant-governor was the thing that would either make or break his career in the company, and that he had to demonstrate his achievements in tangible terms. The precariousness of his situation was made evident as a result of the rivalry between himself and other members of the Java expedition,[17] and the fact that Britain's invasion of Java was *not* met with universal approval back in Britain. On the contrary, critics of the British government (such as the radical Tory parliamentarian William Cobbett) were quick to denounce the invasion of Java as an act of unwarranted war-mongering that would cast Britain in a bad light in the eyes of its allies (see Appendix A).[18] Cobbett further argued that the entire Java enterprise was intended to achieve little more than fill of coffers of the East India Company and the pockets of its board of directors and senior functionaries,[19] and by that time the shadier aspects of the East India Company's internal workings had become the

15 The 20 May 1812 edition of the *London Chronicle* featured, among others, a hair-raising account of how a single detachment of Light Dragoons (the 22nd), with only 97 men, managed to rout 2,500 enemy cavalry and infantry in Java 'with such irresistible impetuosity that that they absolutely rode over the horses and men of the enemy' (Malcolm, ['Tribute'], 523).

16 General John Malcolm's lengthy tribute to Dr Leyden appeared in the press in India as well as England, and it ended with a long poem which began thus:

> Where sleep the brave on Java's strand,
> Thy ardent spirit, Leyden! Sped,
> And Fame with cypress shades the land,
> Where genius fell, and valour bled.
> (Malcolm ['Tribute'], 522).

17 For a critical assessment of Raffles' role in the colonisation of Java and the East Indies, see, for example, Hannigan, *Raffles and the British Invasion of Java*, and Wurtzburg, 'Raffles and the Massacre at Palembang'.

18 For a full transcript of William Cobbett's critique of the invasion of Java, see Appendix A. Perhaps the best biography of William Cobbett is Chesterton, *William Cobbett*.

19 For a fuller account of the criticism by William Cobbett against the invasion of Java, see Noor, 'Anti-Imperialism in the 19th Century'.

subject of public speculation and controversy.[20] It was also unclear as to what the British were meant to do in Java after they had defeated the Dutch, for there was never a grand plan to turn it into a colony.

Painfully aware of the fact that the entire expedition was under scrutiny and that the political-strategic cost of failure (while in the midst of the Napoleonic Wars with France allied to Holland and threatening to invade England) were too high to bear, Raffles took the role of lieutenant-governor seriously. After the Dutch had been forced to retreat to the east of Java, Raffles and the commanders of the combined East India Company forces pushed their advance eastwards, too, and swept the island of all resistance. In the process of doing so, native rulers and communities that stood alongside the Dutch and French were likewise opposed and eliminated, culminating in the invasion of the royal city of Jogjakarta (Yogyakarta) and the sacking of its palace.[21]

The battles that were fought between the British and the Dutch in Java were tame in comparison to the wars being waged by Napoleon in Europe: Within the space of a year, the Dutch-French forces had been defeated; the Dutch merchants and civilians who remained in places like Batavia and Surabaya seemed contented to live under the flag of Britain and the East India Company; and the few native rulers who had resisted the British had been neutralised, deposed and replaced. Raffles, as lieutenant-governor, began a series of ambitious tax and financial reforms, and despatched engineers and cartographers across the island to map and survey Britain's new possession in the East Indies. In the course of doing so Lieutenant-Colonel Colin Mackenzie of the Madras Engineers discovered the ruins of the ancient Buddhist temple of Borobudur, which Raffles later visited and had hastily restored. Java was, during this period, a new *asset* and *market* for the East India Company and it was treated so accordingly.

Throughout the British occupation of 1811-1816 Raffles was primarily a company official and was more concerned about the economic revival of Java. The engineers, cartographers and explorers of the company were the ones who travelled across the island and to other parts of the archipelago,

20 See, for instance, William Cobbett's scathing critique of the secret goings-on between the company directors of the East India Company in 'To the Thinking People of England: On the Affairs of the East India Company – Letter I', 129-147, and 'To the Thinking People of England: On the Affairs of the East India Company – Letter II', 161-189.

21 Note that I have chosen to use the older spelling 'Jogjakarta' as it was more commonly used in the writings of the period then. During the Dutch colonial period the city's name was spelled 'Djogjakarta'.

collecting data about Sumatra, Sulawesi and Borneo (Kalimantan) that was later sent back to the company's headquarters in Batavia. Bit by bit, what would later come to be known as the Indonesian archipelago was unveiled by the scores of explorers who worked at the behest of the company and its directors; though at that stage much of this information was simply being collected and stored for future analysis. Raffles may well have enjoyed his life and role as the lieutenant-governor of Java had it not been for another external variable factor that impacted upon the fortunes of the company and his own in Java, namely the defeat of Napoleon and the liberation of Holland.

When Napoleon met his end at Waterloo, the game was also up for the East India Company in Java. With Holland no longer under the yoke of Napoleon, the British government decided that the time had come to return Java to the Dutch. This was a major blow for Raffles, for whom Java held many prospects and whose reforms had yet to bear fruit. Adding to his woes was the death of Lord Minto, and Raffles was then without a protector-patron who could shield him from the accusations of corruption, cronyism and abuse of power that were then being flung in his direction – a fate he shared with Dawsonne Drake who was likewise accused of corruption and abuse of power while he served as the governor of Manila fifty years earlier. Removed from his post and compelled to return to England, Stamford Raffles began to write, and the work that he produced would play a significant part in developing the myth that would later surround the man, as well as dressing the Java invasion in the mantle of respectability and purpose. The company man was about to transform himself into a *scholar*.

4.b True after the fact: Raffles' *History of Java* as a Justification for British Expansionism

> In essence, *The History of Java* was a work of propaganda.[22]
> – John Bastin, introduction to Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java* (1965)

Raffles finally left Java on 25 March 1816, and the British occupation of the island had come to an end. By then the Java expedition had already been eclipsed by newsworthy developments elsewhere: The East India Company,

22 Bastin, 'Foreword', vii.

which was almost perpetually engaged in some conflict or another, was caught in the Third Anglo-Maratha war of 1817-1818, and the names that became famous in England were of Mountstuart Elphinstone and Generals Hastings and Hislop. By the end of the war the East India Company – and Britain by extension – was in command of all of India south of the Sutlej; an achievement that was lauded back home, and which painted the aborted Java expedition in dimmer light as a result.

It was then that the beleaguered Raffles began work on his book on Java, as he sought to redeem himself and justify the actions that he – as lieutenant-governor and chief representative of the East India Company – took while he was in charge of the island. At the time (1816-1817) there were few works by English authors that could occupy the space left blank as far as East Indies studies were concerned: A second expanded and revised edition of William Marsden's *A History of Sumatra* was republished in 1811 (the year of the Java invasion), while John Stockdale published his *Sketches, Civil and Military, of the Island of Java* in 1811 and again in 1812.[23] But Marsden had, by then, quit the humid climes of Southeast Asia for England, though his work on Sumatra remained the best known and well-regarded, while Stockdale lived a colourful life and was accused of libel on several occasions, and was even charged with the dissemination of pornography. Marsden had not returned to Southeast Asia, and Stockdale had never set foot on Java – yet both works were in demand as the invasion of Java had generated an interest in Britain's latest far-flung colonial acquisition. Interestingly, the second edition of Marsden's (1811) work included a much better map of Sumatra than the first, while Stockdale's work on Java included a detailed map of Java as well as an even more detailed map of the Sunda Straits and an equally impressive map of the city of Batavia.

Raffles' work on Java was meant to plug the gap in East Indies studies and sought to transform him as well: It was a scholarly work by a company man, and it was intended to show that the East India Company's interest in Java was not merely confined to the maximisation of profit and capital. Raffles' foray into the world of Oriental scholarship was hardly a novel act at the time, for as Cohn has shown, the functionaries and commanders of the East India Company had understood the power of knowledge, and how knowledge could support and justify power, in their experience of colonising

23 Stockdale, *Sketches, Civil and Military*.

India.[24] India has been objectified and ideologically reconstructed through the investigative modalities that were employed by the EIC there, and Raffles was about to do the same to Java. Though the work would later earn Raffles the popular acclaim and recognition he so obviously pined for, his critics – both during his time and up to the present – have raised serious questions about the writer himself, his true intentions and the claims that were made in *The History of Java*.

Though William Marsden was appreciative of Raffles' effort,[25] other contemporaries of Raffles were less inclined to shower the work with as much praise. John Crawfurd – who also took part in the Java expedition and played an important role in the attack on Jogjakarta – described Raffles' work as 'hastily written, and not very well arranged'.[26] In his review of *The History* that was published in 1819 (one year before his own *History of the Indian Archipelago* was published), Crawfurd noted that Raffles was 'frequently careless' and that his account of the history and religion of Java were 'by far the worst' chapters of the work; citing errors in chronology and Raffles' 'propensity to magnify the importance of the early story of the Javanese'.[27]

Present-day scholars remain divided over their verdict on the book, and Bastin has raised the question of whether Raffles was really adept at the native languages of Java,[28] noting that in all likelihood Raffles 'lacked

24 Bernard Cohn's work on colonialism in India and the forms of knowledge that it created as British colonial power extended across the land and its people is instructive here. He notes that British colonialism in India was secured via the creation of a vast and complex system of knowledge-building where data-collecting and power projection went hand-in-hand, mutually supporting each other. The racial census, the policy of divide-and-rule, the appropriation of native lands and the appropriation of their culture, history and languages were all part of the investigative modalities of colonialism where it was not enough to have military superiority over a defeated foe. In his study of the historical studies – what he termed 'historiographical modalities' – carried out by East India Company officials and functionaries, Cohn argues that the research that they conducted on the relics and artefacts of India were intended to demonstrate both the antiquity of India as well as its relative backwardness (in comparison to the West) in the present. India's past was thus objectified, categorised and ultimately 'museumised' in order to underline the technological and scientific inferiority of Indians at the time. This, in turn, foregrounded the British (and other Europeans) as the leading civilisation of the age, and the ones who were best able to understand and archive the history of other (defeated and colonised) cultures that they came into contact with (Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*).

25 Bastin, 'Foreword', vii.

26 Ibid., vii.

27 Ibid., vii.

28 Ibid., ii.

William Marsden's ability to handle sources (of information)' that were not written in English or Malay[29] – the two languages he could actually comprehend and use. (It should also be noted that Crawfurd was able to speak Javanese, a fact that impressed many Javanese nobles; while Raffles could not.) Notwithstanding Raffles' often-repeated claim that the Dutch were careless and lackadaisical in their management of Java, and that they were not really interested in any meaningful kind of economic reform, Bastin has noted that Raffles' own work did not refer to earlier Dutch attempts at research and reform, such as Dirk van Hogendorp's *Berigt van den Tegenwoordigen Toestand der Bataafsche Bezittingen in Oost-Indien* (1799), where proposals for a reform of the land rent system had already been suggested.[30] Bastin's point brings us to one of the first observations about Raffles' *History of Java*, namely that it was as much a record of English success as it was a litany of Dutch failures, and that the work also revealed the jaundiced side of Raffles.

4.c Raffles' *History* as a Catalogue of Dutch Errors

> Holland had derived little or no advantage from the nominal sovereignty which she continued to exercise over its [Java's] internal affairs.[31]
>
> – Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java* (1817)

Raffles' *History of Java* was dedicated to the Prince Regent, and in his introduction he noted that the aim of the British government and the East India Company was 'to uphold the weak, and to put down lawless force' as it expanded across the globe 'to promote the arts, sciences and literature'[32] – though just how much of the arts, sciences and literature were actually promoted by the company during its period of control over Java was left unstated by Raffles himself.

The British, and in particular those who were then working for the East India Company, prided themselves with the notion that theirs was not merely a military-commercial endeavour in the East, but also a civilising mission that sought to expand the horizon of knowledge. After the British

29 Ibid., iii.
30 Ibid., iii.
31 Raffles, *The History of Java*, xxvii.
32 Ibid., vi.

defeated the forces of Tipu Sultan at Seringapatam in 1799, Lord Wellesley, then governor-general of India, established the Fort William College in Calcutta with the aim of training a new generation of scholar-colonisers who would govern India while *knowing* it better than ever before.[33] Raffles was part of this militarised commercial-academic enterprise, and his literary output needs to be put in that context. Implicit in the claim being made in his work was the idea that hitherto the land of Java had *not* been properly developed and cultivated, and that the arts, sciences and literature of Java had presumably been neglected by those who previously held sway there: the Dutch.

Thus began Raffles' taxing and laborious, two-volume barrage against the Dutch East Indies Company and the conduct and government of the Dutch in Java. As a work that pandered to the collective ego and pride of the members of the British East India Company and his fellow Englishmen, *The History of Java* was very much a rival-bashing text. Though gaining Java would, Raffles insisted, be an obvious advantage to the company and the British government, its loss 'was no immediate or positive evil for the Dutch', for, as he went on to argue:

> [M]any years before the British expedition, Holland had derived little or no advantage from the nominal sovereignty which she continued to exercise over its [Java's] internal affairs. All trade and intercourse between Europe and Java was interrupted and nearly destroyed; it added nothing to the commercial wealth or the naval means of the mother country; the control of the latter over the agents she employed had proportionally diminished; she continued to send out governors, counsellors and commissioners, but she gained from their inquiries little information about the cause of her failure, and no aid from their exertions in improving her resources, or retarding the approach of ruin. The colony became a burden on the mother country instead of assisting her, and the company which had so long governed it being itself ruined.[34]

With the exception of Marshal Herman Willem Daendels, Raffles had almost no regard whatsoever for the Dutch governors and military leaders who presided over Java before the arrival of the East India Company's

33 Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, 80.

34 Raffles, *The History of Java*, xxvii.

forces.[35] Raffles' disparaging remarks about Dutch rule in Java were not novel either: Marsden was equally disparaging about the scholarly abilities of the Portuguese,[36] and the same sort of condescension was heaped upon the Spanish by the British press during Britain's brief occupation of Manila between 1762-1764, when Britain was at war with Spain as a result of the Seven Years' War.[37]

The History of Java was a lengthy diatribe against the practices of the Dutch East Indies Company, which was the bitter rival of the East India Company, and to that end Raffles took his time to enumerate and account for all the errors the former had made while governing Java. As far as trading companies go, Raffles had a dim view of the Dutch East Indies Company and its mode of economic management. He noted that the VOC had prohibited, *under pain of death*, the free trade of several kinds of fine spices as well as opium among non-Dutch inhabitants of Java, reserving these commodities for their own monopoly.[38] Under Dutch rule, he concluded that the economy of Java had been brought to the brink of ruin thanks to the monopolistic system that they had introduced. As he argued:

> It would be difficult to describe in detail the extent of the commerce in Java, at the period of the establishment of the Dutch in the Eastern seas, as it would be painful to point out how far, or to show in what manner, that commerce was interfered with, checked and changed in its character, and reduced in its importance, by the influence of a withering monopoly, the rapacity of avarice armed with power, and the short-sighted tyranny of a mercantile administration.[39]

Conversely, Raffles was keen to demonstrate – statistically – that the British East India Company had managed, in a space of a few years, to boost productivity and commerce throughout Java. He notes that 'by an official

35 Ibid., xlv. On the subject of Dutch rule, Raffles wrote that 'the leading traits which distinguish the subsequent administration of the Dutch on Java' were 'a haughty assumption of superiority, for the purpose of impressing the credulous simplicity of the natives' combined with 'a most extraordinary timidity' (ibid., vol. 2, 165).

36 In his *History of Sumatra*, William Marsden had lamented the lack of scholarship on Sumatra by the other Europeans who had been in the region longer than the British. Of the Portuguese – who had taken Malacca in 1511, he could only say that they 'were better warriors than philosophers' (Marsden, *The History of Sumatra*, ii).

37 ???

38 Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 1, 218.

39 Ibid., vol. 1, 190.

return made in March 1816, it appears that the total quantity of tonnage in vessels boarded on their passage through the Strait of Sunda amounted in 1812 to 45,000 tons, in 1813 to 56,000 tons, in 1814 to 64,000 tons, and in 1815 to 130,000 tons; to which adding a third for vessels that passed without being boarded, the whole amount of tonnage for these four years would be 390,000 tons, the quantity in the fourth of these years being nearly triple that of the first."[40]

Though the financial statistics stood in favour of Raffles, and bolstered his own position vis-à-vis the accusations of economic mismanagement and corruption that he later faced back in England, his poor opinion of the Dutch *in toto* were less easy to substantiate and accept. As Bastin has noted, Raffles' own reading of Dutch works on Java and the East Indies had been limited and highly selective.[41] Though he may have been correct in his estimation of the VOC's economic prowess and capabilities, the same could not be said for successive generations of Dutch scholars who had written about Java and the rest of the archipelago.

As we have seen earlier, Dutch scholars and explorers such as Wouter Schouten[42] and Johan Nieuhof[43] had lived and travelled across the South-east Asian archipelago centuries before, and had written extensive works about Java and the other islands, their work full of detailed accounts of the peoples and cultures there, accompanied by detailed engravings of the inhabitants, flora and fauna of the region. Furthermore works such as Nieuhof's had been translated into English and were readily available to anyone in England who had an interest in the East Indies[44] – though Raffles does not mention them at all.

That Raffles neglected Dutch scholarship on Java and highlighted Dutch failings in the administration of the island and its economy is hardly surprising, considering his own subject-position as a loyal member of the East India Company, and his company's unending rivalry with the VOC. But Raffles' vituperation of the VOC also opened the way for another objective that was evident in his work: *The rescuing of Java's past* and the aim of bringing Java – along with its people, artefacts and monuments – into the museum of empire.

40 Ibid., vol. 1, 195.

41 Bastin, 'Foreword', iii.

42 Schouten, *Voiage de Gautier Schouten aux Indes Orientales*.

43 Nieuhof, *Zee- en Lant-Reise door verscheide Gewesten van Oostindien*.

44 Nieuhof, *Voyages and Travels into Brasil*.

4.d From Conqueror to Curator: Raffles' Java as a Museum of the Javanese

> The antiquities of Java, have not, until recently, excited much notice.[45]
> – Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java* (1817)

> The power to define the nature of the past, and establish priorities in the creation of a monumental record of a civilisation, and to propound canons of taste, are among the most significant instrumentalities of rulership.[46]
> – Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge* (1996)

Having lost possession of Java, and placed in the uncomfortable position of having to justify his deeds (or misdeeds, according to his detractors) while he was left in charge of the place, Raffles penned a work of history that tells the story of Java's ancient past – as if the more recent happenings of 1811-1816 were still too raw to bear. He noted in his work that 'Java very early emerged from barbarism', and 'an extensive Hindu empire once existed' there.[47] The story that he tells in *The History of Java* is the story of a once-great civilisation that eventually fell to ruin, but was a great civilisation nonetheless, and one which deserved to be *rescued* by the British and allotted its rightful place in the museum of empire alongside other great non-European civilisations such as that of Egypt's and India's – both of which had then been eclipsed by the modern British Empire. (Raffles even compared some of the Javanese statues he saw – but did not recognise or understand – to statues of Egyptian deities, such as Anubis.[48])

As far as self-serving colonial narratives go, Raffles' *History of Java* was typical of the works that would appear throughout the nineteenth century: For the propaganda of racialised colonial-capitalism to get off the ground, it required the necessary fiction of the disabled native Other who was – invariably – cast in terms of backwardness, laziness and degeneration – and Raffles literally referred to the natives as 'degenerate'.[49] Raffles desired to elevate Java's past and by extension raise its worth in the eyes of his fellow Englishmen, who would presumably lament its loss to the Dutch as much

45 Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 2, 6.
46 Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, 10.
47 Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 1, 190.
48 Ibid., vol. 2, 50.
49 Ibid., vol. 2, 6.

as he did. But he also needed to account for its downfall, and for this he relied on the Dutch (who were blamed for the economic mismanagement of Java) as well as the native Javanese (who were faulted for their apathy and neglect of their own culture and heritage).

The History of Java begins with an account of the natives of Java themselves, though Raffles' depiction of the peoples of Java pales in comparison to that of Nieuhof's, who noted the diversity and complexity of Javanese society, populated as it was then by different ethnic groups and mixed, mestizo communities. By contrast, Raffles' own portrait of the people of Java was far more simple and compartmentalised, presenting them as a community with *essential* traits that were mostly unedifying.

The Javanese were depicted by Raffles as 'an agricultural race, attached to the soil'[50] and he noted that 'in manners the Javans are easy and courteous, and respectful even to the point of timidity'.[51] At several points in his work Raffles emphasised again and again the *passive* and *docile* character of the Javanese, as when he pointed out that 'the character of blood-thirsty revenge, which has been attributed to all the inhabitants of the Indian archipelago, by no means applies to the people of Java'.[52] The Javanese, in Raffles' view, were a *once-civilised* people who had fallen into a state of oriental stupor, blinded by superstition and hindered by their own taboos. If the Dutch were too lazy to work the land of Java to its full capacity, the Javanese were too scared to explore their own domain, surrounded as they were by ghosts from their past.[53]

Having stated that 'the Javans are remarkable for their unsuspecting and almost infantile incredulity',[54] Raffles ranks them against the other Asian communities that resided in Java then, whom he painted in a less flattering hue. In contrast to the 'timid' and 'infantile' Javanese, the Chinese were described by Raffles as a people who were 'supple, venal and crafty' and 'without being very scrupulous'. He argued that 'the monopolising spirit of the Chinese was often very pernicious to the produce of the soil, as may be

50 Ibid., vol. 1, 57.

51 Ibid., vol. 1, 61.

52 Ibid., vol. 1, 71.

53 Raffles repeatedly returned to the topic of Javanese taboos, including those linked to places that were considered sacred or dangerous. In his chapter on the history of Central Java, he recounts how and why the court of Mataram was forced to relocate to Kartasura: 'The Javans have a superstitious belief, that when once fortune had fallen on a place so generally as to extend to the common people, which was the case at Mataram, it will never afterwards prosper; it was therefore determined to change the seat of the empire' (Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 2, 189).

54 Ibid., vol. 1, 245.

seen… at all the public markets farmed by them, and the degeneracy and poverty of the lower orders are proverbial'.[55] The Arabs, on the other hand, were seen as a negative influence on the Javanese for they 'inculcate the most intolerant bigotry'[56] and through the propagation of their faith and culture, had influenced the Javanese to the extent that the latter no longer appreciated, or knew, their own past. Unlike the more complex world of Java that was found in the writing of Nieuhof, where hybridity was duly noted, Raffles' description of Javanese society presented a simple typology that was based on neat categorisation.

Raffles certainly did not invent racism, but he worked for a company that introduced and enforced racial distinctions among the communities that came under its rule.[57] Adopting the then-typical attitude of divide-and-rule that was also at work in other British colonies, Raffles counselled a division of labour and the segregation of the communities, in order to protect the Javanese from other Asiatic communities and to better regulate the trade that was being conducted by the Chinese and Arabs in Java: 'Let the Chinese and Arabs still trade', he insisted, 'but let their trade be regulated; and above all let them not be left in the enjoyment of immunities and advantages, which are neither possessed by Europeans or the indigenous inhabitants of the country'.[58]

Having mapped out the social landscape of Java as he found it then, Raffles delved into the ancient history of the island – a history which he felt had been forgotten by the 'timid' and 'superstitious' Javanese themselves, and which had been neglected by the profit-seeking Dutch.[59] (Which was

55 Ibid., vol. 1, 224-225.

56 Ibid., vol. 1, 228.

57 Long before such racial distinctions were brought to Java, the East India Company had already introduced similar distinctions – which were sometimes rendered more complex by the addition of gendered differences – to the communities in India that came under company rule. See, for example, Hall, Review of Mrinalini Sinha.

58 Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 1, 228-229.

59 That Raffles had a low opinion of Dutch scholarship on Java and its antiquities in particular was evident in his work, and at one point he wrote bluntly that 'the antiquities of Java, have not, until recently, excited much notice; nor have they been sufficiently explored. *The narrow policy of the Dutch denied to other nations the possibility of research*; and their own *devotion to the pursuits of commerce was too exclusive* to allow of them to be much interested by the subject. The numerous remains of former arts and grandeur, which exists in the ruins of temples and other edifices; the abundant treasure of sculpture and statuary with which some parts of the island are covered; and the evidences of a former state of religious belief and national improvement, which are presented in images, devices and inscriptions, either lay entirely buried under rubbish, or were left unexamined' (Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 2, 6; my emphasis). In effect, Raffles was plainly stating that until the arrival of the British the Dutch were somewhat philistine in

entirely untrue, for the major temple-complexes of Java such as Borobudur and Prambanan had been featured in the maps and surveys done by the Dutch for ages.) For Raffles, the Javanese were a people whose degeneration was almost complete, and who were so far removed from their past that 'the grandeur of their ancestors sound like a fable in the mouth of a degenerate Javan',[60] and 'the indifference of the natives (to their past) has been as great as their Dutch conquerors'.[61] The passing of the Hindu-Buddhist era and the coming of Islam to Java meant, for Raffles, that Java's glorious past was now relegated to history forever, and that the temples that were built by the Javanese of old were destined to fall into ruin as 'the faith they were to honour has now no honour in the land'.[62] As neither the Javanese nor the Dutch, in his opinion, cared much for Java's history, Raffles took it upon himself to play the role of the protector-preserver of Java's antiquities and cultural patrimony. It is here that Raffles' *museological modality* – to borrow Cohn's term – came into its own.[63]

Chapters 9, 10 and 11 of the book – 'On Religion',[64] 'The History of Java from the Earliest Traditions'[65] and 'The History of Java from the Establishment of Mohametanism till the Arrival of the British Forces in 1811'[66] – give a broad account of Java's past dating back to the Hindu-Buddhist era. It was here that Raffles was able to remodel himself as the curator of Java's past. The plates by Daniell – that were based on sketches that had been made by the surveyors and explorers despatched by the company across Java – brought to life the architectural wonders and artefacts of Java that were then presented to British readers for the first time. And though many of these monuments and relics were actually discovered by other members of the Java expedition (such as Lieutenant-Colonel Colin Mackenzie, who discovered the ruins of Borobudur and Prambanan), it was Raffles who was able to bring together this vast body of data into a single book that bore his name. Conversely, Raffles claimed the Javanese had forgotten about the temples altogether.[67]

their manners and lack of appreciation for Javanese culture, which was only rescued and made known to the world thanks to the labour of the British who discovered them.

60 Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 2, 6.

61 Ibid., vol. 2, 7.

62 Ibid., vol. 2, 16.

63 Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, 9-10.

64 Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 2, 1-65.

65 Ibid., vol. 2, 66-135.

66 Ibid., vol. 2, 136-230.

67 Raffles claimed that the British had discovered Chandi Suku (Candi Sukuh) in Central Java, while the Javanese had forgotten that it was even there (ibid., vol. 2, 49).

Raffles did not relent in his back-dating of Javanese history, and in his attempt to add more gravitas and patina to the Java that was taken away from him. In his account of Javanese culture, customs and material history, he traced everything back to the 'extensive Hindu empire' that was, for him, the wellspring from which much of Javanese culture and tradition later emerged. Facing page 412 of the first volume of the work, in the chapter where he discussed the literature and poetry of the Javanese, Raffles inserted another map – *A Sketch of the Situation of the Different Countries Referred to in the Brata Yudha, According to the Notion of the Javans*[68] – which once again alluded to the antiquity of Javanese civilisation and how it could, and should, be placed on par with the ancient civilisation of the Hindus of India.

What is less apparent in his work is the extent to which Raffles' own curatorial capabilities were newly-discovered, and that he himself was equally in the dark about the temples and statues that were being uncovered as the British extended their power across the island. At some points in his work his gaffes are easily seen, and almost laughable: Writing on Candi Sukuh, he described the statue of Garuda as a 'great eagle' – though there had been few sightings of eagles endowed with arms and legs at the time.[69] Elsewhere in his work he conceded that he had requested the help of the Bengali Sepoys of the East India Company's army to help him decipher and understand the relics, statues and temples they found.[70] (More than a thousand Bengali troops had in fact been seconded to serve in the administrative service in Java by then.[71])

But while he mapped out Java's ancient Hindu-Buddhist past and located its residual traces in its contemporary art, literature and customs, Raffles was also keen to emphasise that these discoveries were being made by a modern Englishman who (had) presided over a modern English administration that was funded and backed by a modern English company. The unstated boast that can be read off the pages of *The History of Java* is that modernity had arrived in Java, and modern colonial-capitalism was both the engine of progress as well as the protector of the past. A bold statement that encapsulated this idea was needed, and that statement came in the form of the map of Java that Raffles produced for his work.

68 Ibid., vol. 2, 412-413.

69 Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 2, 50.

70 Ibid., vol. 2, 9-10.

71 Interview with Peter Carey, Jakarta, 6 February 2016.

4.e *You've Been Mapped*: Raffles' Map of Java as the Victory of Modernity

> Imperialism after all is an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted and eventually brought under control.
>
> – Edward Said, in McClure (1994)

The history of cartography in the West is intimately and obviously linked to the history of exploration as well as military power and conquest. Local Asian knowledge of geography had by then been rendered redundant thanks to the arrival of the gunboat and the modern company, and by the nineteenth century the only geography that mattered was terrestrial – as opposed to cosmological or metaphysical accounts of humankind's place in the universe.[72]

By the time the British had trained their sights on Java in 1811, it was clear that there was a need for better, more detailed and accurate maps of the region. Marsden's *History of Sumatra* had been republished that year, with a much better map that was prepared by J. Walker. The maps of Java, however, were mostly put together based on information that had been compiled by the Dutch, some of which they were not inclined to share with their rivals.

To surmount this gap in knowledge, Raffles commissioned a map to be made to accompany his two-volume work. The work that went into making the map – the many excursions and forays into the interior of the island, the surveys of its mountains and plains, and the battles that were fought – took place during the period of British rule that lasted from 1811 to 1816. To this end, Raffles relied on the reports and surveys that were conducted by the many officers, surveyors and explorers that were on the payroll of the government and the East India Company, and some of them

72 Anderson has noted that prior to the coming of Western colonialism to Southeast Asia, Southeast Asian societies had developed and used two types of native maps that were meaningful and relevant to their own needs, the cosmological map and the travel guide-map: 'The "cosmograph" was a formal representation of the three worlds of traditional cosmology. The cosmography was not organised horizontally, like our own maps; rather a series of superterrestrial heavens and subterrestrial hells wedged in the visible world along a single vertical axis. It was useless for any journey save that in a search for salvation and merit. The second type, wholly profane, consisted of diagrammatic guides for military campaigns and coastal shipping. Organised roughly by the quadrant, their main features were written-in notes for marching and sailing times, required because the map-makers had no technical conception of scale. Neither type of map marked borders' (Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 171-172).

travelled to the other outer islands to deliver their reports to him. While Raffles consolidated his hold on Java, men like J. Hunt were on the prowl in Kalimantan, feeding him with information about its history and its resources, as well as tales of pirates.[73]

Raffles' map ranks – until today – as one of the most impressive maps of Java ever made. Entitled *A Map of Java Chiefly from Surveys Made during the British Administration Constructed in Illustration of an Account of Java by Thomas Stamford Raffles, Esq.,* it was engraved by John Walker – who produced the map for Marsden's 1811 work on Sumatra and who would later engrave the maps for both *A History of the Indian Archipelago* and *A Journal of an Embassy to the Court of Ava* by John Crawfurd.[74] A steelplate engraving, it measures 45 inches by 22.5 inches. It was included in the first edition of Raffles' work in 1817. So popular was Raffles' work that it was translated into several languages, and later republished by John Murray in 1830. But what stood out from the text, and what captured the imagination of the British public then, were the engravings – copperplate lithographs and chromolithographs – that awakened the imagination of the public. Later in 1844 a special edition of the plates by Daniell was republished by Henry G. Bohn, which comprised *only* of the images from Raffles' book, without the text – but with an additional twenty-two plates that had not been published before. The most enduring element of the work, however, was Walker's map, which was to be found in the 1817 edition (and all the translated versions of the book) as well as the 1830 and 1844 editions. The map of Java – reproduced again and again from the original 1817 plate – was perhaps the only constant feature in the recurring avatars of Raffles' work. Even John Crawfurd, who was critical of Raffles' work in his review of *The History of Java*, had to concede that the Raffles-Walker map was 'the best ever compiled'.[75]

Exactly how many scholars have gone blind as a result of trying to read Walker-Raffles' map remains undocumented, though such a figure must surely exist. As far as detailed information goes, this was a map that left nothing to chance. Raffles' map included more than 365 place names for villages, towns, cities, ports and ancient monuments; along with more than a 150 major and minor rivers and streams that coursed along the landscape

73 Hunt, 'A Sketch of Borneo'.

74 In contrast to the map he did for Raffles, Walker's map of the Indonesian archipelago that came with Crawfurd's book was much less impressive: Java appears in the map, but with none of the detail that is to be found in the earlier map that appeared in 1817 (Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago*.)

75 Bastin, 'Foreword', vii.

of Java. Every hill, mountain and valley of Java was accounted for, as was every temple and monument.

Cognisant, perhaps, that the map was being produced for a British public that was growing increasingly aware of their global power and role in world affairs, the map of Java in Raffles' work presents the reader with a Java that is *reachable* and thus *conquerable*. Far from fuzzy in its treatment of the contours of the island, Raffles' map provided the most detailed outline of the shoreline of Java from east to west and shows the reader exactly where the best landing spots were. Four insets at the bottom of the map provide detailed descriptions of the harbours at Nusa Kembangan, Pelabuhan Batu (Wyn Coops Bay) and even Pacitan – later to be the birthplace of the sixth president of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. A panopticon effect is achieved in the map by the inclusion of these small insets, for these smaller, precise maps add the impression of 'zooming in and out' as one surveys the length and breadth of the island, reminding us of the omnipresent gaze of the colonial surveyor for whom every beach, river, village and hamlet was of economic and strategic importance, and leaving no blank spaces anywhere on the map itself.

The scientific gaze is represented by another inset that appears at the top of the map, which features a mineralogical map of Java that was prepared in 1812 by a scientist, Dr Thomas Horsfeild. The importance of this inset lies in the fact that it showed how Western scientists were then able to map not only the salient and obvious features of the Javanese countryside, but were also able to penetrate deep into the earth itself to reveal its hidden mysteries. The implicit message to the Javanese was simply this: *That though they claimed to be the natives of their own land, the Javanese did not know it as well as the Europeans who could marshal the powers of science to uncover the unknown.* This fitted well with the tone and tenor of Raffles' writings on the Javanese, whom he summarily regarded as a people steeped in history but who lagged behind in scientific development; a notion in keeping with the 'myth of the lazy native' that was being put together by Raffles and his contemporaries.

The scientific gloss that can be read off Raffles' map of Java does not disguise the fact that this was fundamentally a map of power and control. The mapping of Java and the rest of Southeast Asia would continue in earnest long after the British had returned the island to the Dutch, and in the decades to come much of the region would come under the order of knowledge and power of empire. British, Dutch, French, Spanish, Portuguese and later American cartographers, geologists, ethnologists and socio-economic engineers would ultimately create their own accounts of the

world of Southeast Asia, competing against each other to prove that theirs was the nation that commanded the most advanced tools and methods of scientific analysis. In the process they neglected, and sometimes denied, the local epistemologies, geographies and belief systems of the native communities they studied and ruled over.[76]

The contrast between Java's ancient (premodern, unscientific) past and the present (modern, technologically advanced) reality of British colonial rule is something that recurs again and again in the map: Raffles' map maps out not only the past of Java (its monuments, ruins, deserted cities), but crucially it documents on the same landscape the accomplishments of the British: The new road that was built in 1815, and on a more personal note, the exact route taken by Raffles himself on his expedition across Central Java that same year (1815) are both represented on the map.

The new road from Batavia to Cirebon that was built by the British in 1815 ran closer to the northern coast, and was a more direct route compared to the older Dutch road that went inland and wound its way through many smaller towns and villages.[77] Its aim was to open a new channel of communication to Cirebon that was closer and faster, thereby *expediting the movement* of both troops and goods in times of war and peace. Raffles' inland expeditionary route, on the other hand, plods across the countryside and traverses mountains and valleys, stopping along isolated hamlets and the ruins of Borobudur,[78] the slopes of Mounts Merapi and Merapu, the ancient royal capital of Surakarta, and all the way deep into East Java – establishing the fact that Raffles himself had traversed two-thirds of the island. Note that in Walker's map, it is *Raffles'* trek to Central Java that is

76 One of the very few British cartographers who gave any credit to local sources was Alexander Darymple, whose maps of Sabah, Palawan and the rest of the Sulu Archipelago were among the few that mention the names of local navigators in its acknowledgements. Darymple was unique in this respect, for most of the European cartographers of the time did not bother to thank or acknowledge the help of any of their local informants and assistants.

77 The new road built by the British in 1815 started in Batavia and stopped at only a few places such as Crawang (Krawang), Chiasem (Kiasem), Pamanukan (Pemanukan), Pagindangan and then met up with the older Dutch road at Galu before it ended at Cirebon. By contrast, the older inland road that was used during the Dutch period stopped at the following places on the way to Cirebon: Tana Abang (Tanah Abang), Simplicitas, Buitenzorg, Gadog, Chis rua, Lui Malang, Tugu, Padarinchbang, Chipang, Chi Herang, Chi Jedil, Pagutan, Chi Blagong, Bayabang, Chi Chendo, Chi Langcap (Cilacap), Chi Tapas, Chi Rangjang, Chi Padu, Chi Harasas, Bajong, Bandung, Sindang Lair, Chi Nunuk, Chi Kro, Chi Langsar, Chi Baram, Sunedang, Cha Untung, Cha Chuban, Chambong, Cha Pelang, Karang Sambanik, Chi Kru, Banjaran, Galu, Banjaran and Plombon.

78 Raffles elaborates further on the temples of Borobudur and Prambanan in his *History of Java*, vol. 2, 6-68 (chapter 9).

recorded for posterity, despite the fact that the ruins of Borobudur were discovered by Mackenzie earlier. In fact, *only* Raffles name appears on the map, as well as the traces of his journey across Java – nowhere in the map is there any acknowledgement of the combined efforts of the other explorers, cartographers, soldiers and scientists who were part of the Java expedition.

The two routes are represented in the map in a strikingly different manner: Raffles' expeditionary path is marked out in *broken* lines; while the new road of 1815 is marked out in bold parallel *unbroken* lines. The first was a winding, circuitous path taken in the untamed jungles of the countryside; the second a relatively straight path that cut across the island like a knife. Thus while Java's past was represented by tiny vignettes and place names of monuments like Borobudur and Prambanan, the latest (British) additions to the Javanese landscape were added to the map. Placed side-by-side, Java's antiquity was ranked next to Britain's modernity.

The fact that the map features the roads that were built by the British during their occupation tells us something about the map's intention, which was more than simply mapping the land of Java. For starters, it charts the progress of British expansion across the island, from their main base at Batavia to the east of the island, and records the advance of British military power that also meant the expansion of the sphere of British rule and law. Secondly, the inclusion of the new road built in 1815 also tells us that the British were not idling away their time in Java, sipping cocktails while the natives laboured: This was a statement about British industry, in keeping with the East India Company's ethos of solid work and enterprise, and it showed a lack of respect for the Dutch in an implicit manner, suggesting that the Dutch administration had been lax when it came to the development of the logistical and communicative infrastructure of their colony. Finally, by building such roads across the length of Java, the British were effectively projecting their own power across the island and consolidating power further at its political centre. (The new 1815 road meant that communication between Batavia and Cirebon was faster and more direct.) In effect, Raffles' map, with its detailed description of the new roads being built, was bringing the totality of Java – with its disparate and distinct ethnic communities, provinces and princely domains – into a singular unit, unifying them all within the rubric of a united colony.

Raffles' map of Java was an explicit statement of political and epistemic control over the island, an attempt to literally place the stamp of the British

Empire and East India Company on the entire land mass. And as Benedict Anderson noted, among the many functions of colonial-era maps was the quasi-legal transfer of native lands into the hands of the colonising powers themselves:

> Fully aware of their interloper status in the distant tropics, but arriving from a civilisation in which the legal inheritance and the legal transferability of geographic space had long been established, the Europeans frequently attempted to legitimize the spread of their power by quasi-legal methods. Among the more popular of these was their 'inheritance' of the putative sovereignties of native rulers whom the Europeans had eliminated or subjected. Either way, the usurpers were in the business, especially vis-à-vis other Europeans, of reconstructing the property-history of their new possessions.[79]

The process of bringing Java under British control necessarily meant the eradication of the last vestiges of Dutch resistance and the taming of local native power centres that may have balked under the British yoke. If the map of Java by Walker-Raffles is so detailed, covering even the most remote parts of the island that had hardly been given the same attention before, it is due to the fact that Britain's war against both the Dutch and the native rulers was spread across the island and fought out in every corner. Beyond the boast of military accomplishments that Raffles made in his work, there is also another not-too-subtle boast that can be read off the map as well: Raffles' map, packed as it was with minute and precise details of the lay of the land, was also a way of establishing both *political and epistemic leverage* over his Dutch rivals. By producing a map that was so rich in information (much of which had been culled from Dutch maps and other sources) and exact in its measurements, Raffles and his team of officers, surveyors and cartographers were saying to the Dutch that they had managed to do in six years (1811-1816) what the Dutch had failed to do in a century: that is, to know more, learn more, document more and archive more of Java than any other Western power ever did or could.

79 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 174-175.

4.f The Conquest of Java's Land and History: Raffles' *History* as a Work of Epistemic Arrest

> Triangulation by triangulation, war by war, treaty by treaty, the alignment of map and power proceeded.[80]
> – Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1983)

The modern reader who looks at Raffles' map of Java sees an island that is fully constituted as a singular, arrested entity. But what we fail to realise is that the process of data-collection that led to *The History of Java* took six years, and that the information found in it was compiled stage-by-stage as the conquest of Java plodded along its own pace.

Coming to know Java, and to be able to make epistemic claims about the land and its people, was a slow process that necessarily relied upon the use of force and violence. The British public was made aware of this violent conquest through the irregular reports that would make their way back to England,[81] though up to 1817 they were not aware that this would eventually lead to the publication of Raffles' work. For the reading public back in England at the time, the names of places like Cheribon (Cirebon), Taggall (Tegal), Ledayo, Gressie (Gresik), Samarang and Sourabaya (Surabaya) might as well have been on the dark side of the moon, for there was no way of knowing where they were, or if they even existed at all. The public may have

80 Ibid., 173.

81 The account of the British advance to the east of Java was featured in *The Gentleman's Magazine* of February 1812, where under the heading 'Interesting Intelligence from the London Gazettes' we find reports from Java that had been sent by Rear-Admiral Robert Stopford, and Captains Beaver, Harris and Hillyar. Admiral Stopford's report to the admiralty office – which was reproduced in the magazine in full – detailed the plan of attack against the combined Dutch-French forces that took place at sea and on land. It gives a vivid account of the logistical preparations involved, the names of the ships that were used – the *Francis Drake*, the *Scipion*, the *Phaethon*, the *Dasher*, the *Nisus*, the *Illustrious*, the *President*, the *Phoebe*, the *Hesper* (a sloop), the *Lion*, the *Minden*, the *Leda*, the *Modeste*, etc. – as well as the number of men involved in the expedition – a final total of 1,500 soldiers and marines, 600 sepoys, 50 cavalry and two batteries of artillery. Crucially, the report by Admiral Stopford and Captains Beaver, Harris and Hillyar mention the names of places that were, presumably, unknown to the readers back in England then: Batavia, Cheribon (Cirebon, where the French general Jamelle was captured as he was changing horses), Taggall (Tegal), Ledayo (Sedayu), Gressie (Gresik), Samarang (Semarang), and finally Sourabaya (Surabaya). Also mentioned in the reports was Sumanap (Sumenep) in Madura, where the British had managed to persuade the local ruler to abandon his alliance with the Dutch and hop on to the British side. See 'Report of Rear-Admiral Robert Stopford', 167-169; 'Report of Captain Beaver', 169; 'Report of Captain Hillyar', 169-170; , 170; and 171.

derived comfort, however, in the thought that Britain's blitzkrieg across Java was a resounding success (as the news confirmed) and at every single one of these places, 'the French colours were hauled down, and the English hoisted in their place'.[82] Captain Harris, in his report of the successful action by the British in Madura, even added that by the end of the campaign there 'there is not a Frenchman or a Dutchman on the island left'.[83] It was this process of eliminating and erasing all traces of Dutch and French power across Java that also cleared the ground for its conquest by the British, and in turn the precise details of these places – their location, coordinates, the size of their populations, etc. – would come to be known, and finally incorporated in the grand map of Java that was being put together.

The few Javanese rulers who did have the temerity to stand up to the British were swiftly dealt with, and the newspapers back in England did not only report on British victories over the Dutch, but over the native rulers, too.[84] The April 1813 edition of *The Gentleman's Magazine* featured the full report written by Colonel Rollo Gillespie to the Office of Commissioners of India (dated 25 June 1812) where he recounted the circumstances of the attack on, and subsequent defeat of, the Central Javanese kingdom of Djojocarta (Jogjakarta).[85] Citing the 'defiance' of the 'insolent' sultan who refused to accept the terms imposed by the British, Gillespie recounts in detail the campaign against the kingdom that culminated in the siege of the *krattan* (*kraton,* or palace) and its sacking. Gillespie's report describes the fortifications of Jogjakarta and praises the gallantry of many of the officers who took part in the battle – including John Crawfurd, for 'his talents and exertions'.[86] It also describes the environs around Jogjakarta in some detail, and it is no wonder that in the final map of Java that Raffles produced later in 1817 Yugjakerta (Jogjakarta) and the surrounding localities of Bantul

82 169.

83 'Captain Harris' Letter to the Admiralty', 171.

84 Across much of Java, the British were able to win over the local rulers and persuade them to hand over the reins of government in exchange for money: The Sultan of Banten, for instance, was happy to let the British map out the districts of West Java (in 1813) for a princely pension of 10,000 Spanish dollars per year (Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 2, 267). Raffles adds that the lands of Banten were soon put to productive use afterwards. Madura was likewise mapped once the rulers had thrown in their lot with the British; Cirebon's environs were mapped once the British captured the rebel pretender Bagus Rangen, to the satisfaction of the ruler who was then obligated to the East India Company (ibid., vol. 2, 274-275). Central and East Java came under the regime of the cartographer and map-maker not long after the ruler of Jogjakarta Hamengkubuwono II was deposed.

85 'Intelligence from the London Gazettes', 364-366.

86 Ibid., 366.

Karang, Kamira Sewi, Jenu, Brambanan (Prambanan) and others are so accurately depicted on the chart.

Not included in the report, however, was the account of how violent and brutal the overthrow of the court of Jogja really was – something that would later be recounted by historians like Carey, whose history of the British invasion of Java was written from the perspective of the Javanese themselves.[87] The British public not informed about the number of Javanese defenders who were shot to pieces at the walls of the palace or the number of manuscripts, ornaments and regalia that were stolen by the victors or the abuse meted out upon the members of the Jogja royal household, who had their jewellery ripped off their bodies by the British and Bengali troops after they had broken into the royal compound.[88]

The report ends with the proclamation by Stamford Raffles himself – issued earlier on 15 June 1812 – 'that the Sultan Hamangkubuana [Hamengkubuwono] the Second is deposed from his throne and government, because he had violated his treaties, and proved unworthy of the confidence of the British government' and that 'the Pangueran [Pangeran] Adipati, the late deposed prince, is now declared Sultan of the Kingdom of Mataram'.[89] And if the readers back home in England were curious to know what a Javanese prince looked like, then Raffles' *History* would illuminate them with the hand-coloured plates by Daniell, which featured an array of Javanese personalities – including a prince in courtly dress – captured in

87 Carey, *The British in Java*.

88 Though the memory of the British attack on Jogjakarta has waned, there remain members of the Jogja royal family and the general public of Jogjakarta who can still recount the events that took place during the attack as if it happened yesterday. The brother of the present ruler of Jogjakarta, Prince Gusti Bendoro Pangeran Haryo Yudhaningrat, recounted the attack in the course of our interview thus: 'The British and their sepoys attacked the *kraton* [palace] from the North, and then discovered that there was a weak spot along the Eastern wall, so they diverted their cavalry and cannons there as well. The fighting was so bloody that by the end of the day the northern *alun-alun* [gardens] was covered with bodies, and the blood drenched the grass. The walls of the *kraton* were splattered with blood as the sepoys pushed through the gates, and the people in the *kraton* felt that the British and Bengalis behaved like animals, like madmen. Once they broke through the defences, they entered the palace and took everything. They even ripped the jewellery from the body of the Queen herself, and to insult the *kraton* even further they deposed the ruler. The next day Raffles and the British officers forced all the members of the court to line up before them, and one by one the nobles were forced to kneel and kiss the feet of the British. That is what they did to us: they destroyed our palace, and they destroyed the heart of Javanese culture and Javanese power. After that, we had nothing' (Interview with Prince Gusti Bendoro Pangeran Haryo Yudhaningrat, Jogjakarta, 8 February 2016).

89 'Intelligence from the London Gazettes', 366.

a full-figure portrait mode, standing frozen like mannequins in a state of permanent, unnatural stasis.

That the images of Java by Daniells proved to be popular in England was not surprising, considering the fact that by then Britain was on its way to becoming an imperial power and that the British public was growing accustomed to images of defeated natives being put up on display like trophies. Cohn notes that this trend began with Britain's victories in India earlier, and following the defeat of Tipu Sultan at Seringapatam in 1799 images of the vanquished Indian ruler were widely circulated among the British public back home.[90]

From triumph to triumph, the British defeated or co-opted the Dutch, French and Javanese across Java and thus found themselves in the position of being the undisputed masters of the land. Java was theirs to study and survey, and this is what Anderson meant by the alignment of the map and power[91]: First victory, then pacification, then mapping, then instrumental knowledge: The fall and capture of local polities such as Banten, Cirebon, Gresik, Surabaya and Jogjakarta meant that they were ready to be studied and mapped, 'and by such measures, a much more regular, active, pure, and efficient administration was established on Java than ever existed at any former period of the Dutch company' Raffles smugly concluded.[92] *To know the other meant knowing the defeated.*

And having defeated the Javanese, Raffles and the company administration he led were now able to study them in detail. Appended to the *History of Java* were the 'Regulations of 1814 for the More Effectual Administration of Justice in the Provincial Courts of Java'. These were introduced by Raffles and laid down the framework for a native police force that would help the colonial government monitor, police, regulate and restrict (when necessary) the movements and activities of the entire native population of interior Java, fixing them – almost literally – to their specific localities and occupations,

90 Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, 102.

91 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 173.

92 Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 2, 283. When Java was handed back to the Dutch in 1816, Dutch cartographers began mapping the island in earnest, but by then the lasting impact of British rule could no longer be erased or ignored: Johannes van den Bosch's map of 1818 and I. Dornseiffen's map of 1892 aspired to be as detailed as Raffles-Walker's map of 1817, but even they could not leave out the 'new Batavia-Cirebon' road that the British had built in 1815. The British had packed up and gone, but the impression they left on the landscape of Java was permanent (Van den Bosch, Map III-IV-V: *Kaart van het Ryk van Bantam, Jacatra & Cheribon, op het eiland Java*, and Dornseiffen, *Atlas van Nederlandsch Oost- en West-Indie*).

and rendering movement increasingly difficult (Appendix B). Both the land and the people of Java were thus arrested.

4.g Southeast Asia as the Stage for Self-Reinvention: The Legacy of Raffles' *History of Java*

To do good to mankind is the chivalrous plan,
And is always as nobly requited;
Then battle for freedom wherever you can
And if not shot or hang'd, you'll get knighted.
– Lord Byron, 'When a Man Hath No Freedom to Fight for at Home' (1820)

That is what they did to us: they destroyed our palace, and they destroyed the heart of Javanese culture and Javanese power. After that, we had nothing.
– Crown Prince Gusti Bendoro Pangeran Haryo Yudhaningrat, Jogjakarta, 8 February 2016

As a result of the publication of *The History of Java*, Raffles was able to reinvent and represent himself to the British public as something more than just a company man. The once-obscure clerk of the East India Company was now a man of letters and had been knighted by the Prince Regent himself. In time his reputation would grow – the botanist William Jack even named a type of pitcher-plant after him, *Nepenthes rafflesiana* – and after his death his second wife, Sophia Hull, would sing his praises in her work dedicated to him, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles* (1830). But in the immediate aftermath of the Java expedition Raffles would have to contend with being posted to Bencoolen instead, as its governor-general.[93]

93 Raffles returned to Southeast Asia and landed in Bencoolen, West Sumatra, in March 1818. The British had established a presence there since 1685, but by the time Raffles arrived the East India Company had introduced African slaves to the settlement, to work in the coffee plantations there – a practice that Raffles did not approve of. A report in *The Times* of London, dated 3 September 1818, stated that Raffles, upon landing in Bencoolen had immediately introduced a new law that banned cock-fighting and other forms of gambling, and that his arrival coincided with the establishment of the Sumatran Auxiliary Bible Society, led by Reverend Winter. Despite the role of the East India Company in the opium trade, Raffles himself disapproved of its consumption and was known for his frugal work habits and lifestyle The Times, London, 29 December 1818, pg 2 column 4.

During the final decade of his life leading to his early death in 1826, Raffles would be caught in a string of rivalries and conflicts with the Dutch over Bencoolen, Palembang[94] and Padang[95] (in Borneo) as well as his erstwhile colleagues in the East India Company. Working for a company that promoted aggressive competition against its rivals also meant that Raffles – like many of the functionaries of the East India Company – would be embroiled in a number of personal conflicts with other company men such as John Crawfurd and William Farquhar,[96] as well as the Dutch of the VOC. His critics at the time (and up to the present, such as Alatas) also blamed him for the massacre of the Dutch in Palembang, a sordid affair that tainted his reputation.[97] But being a functionary of this global company with militarised capabilities meant that Raffles did what was expected of him: He sought out new territories that could be brought under the influence of

94 The 29 December 1818 issue of *The Times* of London reported that 'letters have been received from Batavia of so late a date as the 20th of August. They mention a strange occurrence on the part of the Dutch authorities at Palimbam [Palembang], on the east coast of Sumatra. Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, the Lieutenant-Governor of Fort Marlborough [Bencoolen], on the western coast of the island, deemed it expedient to send an embassy to some native princes in the interior, the members of which, having had occasion to pass through the Kingdom of Palimbam were seized by the order of the Dutch authorities, and made prisoners. As soon as the information of this event reached the Governor, he despatched a number of troops to Palimbam, to demand the restoration of the prisoners, and to obtain redress for the insult that was offered. This unpleasant news had created some considerable alarm in Batavia' ('Letters Have Been Received from Batavia', 2).

95 On 10 November 1818, *The Times* of London reported the following: 'Notwithstanding what you say to the contrary in England, I do assure you that we here are in a state of perfect tranquillity, and feel no alarm, as the Dutch have a force of 10,000 men, which is equal to any exigency. It is, however, easy to see that no real cordiality exists between the English and the Dutch authorities. Raffles' establishment at Bencoolen excites much jealousy: he has lately sent, as a sort of ambassador, Major Travers, who was formerly in Java; the professed object was to obtain salt, but the real one said to be, to make some heavy claims on the [Dutch] government on behalf of the company, in which it is supposed that he will not succeed. A Dutch frigate, having on board M. Da Puy and a military force lately sailed to take possession of Padang, on the coast of Borneo. She proceeded as far as Bencoolen, but has returned with the resident and the troops. The reason assigned is, that [G]overnor Raffles refused to give up Padang until certain outstanding claims against that settlement are discharged. An expedition, consisting of 800 men, has just sailed for the Borneo coast and Malacca; the latter is ceded to them, and they of course are going to take possession [of it]' (['Extract of a Letter from Batavia'], 2).

96 Major-General William Farquhar was another senior officer of the East India Company, and is credited – along with Raffles – with the founding of Singapore as a trading colony in 1819. Yet in the years that followed, Farquhar's role would be diminished by Raffles and his supporters, leaving Farquhar deeply resentful towards Raffles.

97 For a critical assessment of Raffles' legacy and his role in the Palembang massacre, see Alatas, *Thomas Stamford Raffles*.

both the British crown and the East India Company, and his goal was the glorification of the former and the enrichment of the latter; both of which he succeeded to do during his limited tenure as lieutenant-governor of Java.

Stamford Raffles and his fellow company men like John Crawfurd[98] lived at a time when the accumulation of data went hand-in-hand with the accumulation of power. The data they collected was put to work in the service of empire, and the results of their labours were geological surveys, ethnic-racial censuses, political reports, military briefings and maps of conquest. The net result of Raffles' data-collecting and expansionist manoeuvring was the conceptualisation of the Javanese as a singular race that was fatalistic, lazy and docile (Alatas, 1977); a conclusion he had been working towards even before the Java expedition, when he began writing about the *Melayu* people of the archipelago.[99] None of these company men doubted that imperialism was a good thing and that racialised colonial-capitalism was a positive force for change. There is no need for us today to offer excuses for Raffles' conduct, for he was a man of his time; and like the other men of his time whose company he kept, he was an imperialist who believed that racial differences were real; and that the different races were to be ranked in a hierarchical order where the superior races would govern the lesser ones. Raffles was not the one who invented racialised colonial-capitalism: he was simply the product of the worldview and value-systems of his era, and a rather unimaginative company functionary, too.

98 Raffles and Crawfurd were both men of the East India Company – and, according to Hannigan, bitter rivals, too. Their scholarly outputs were likewise different in many ways: Raffles, who had earlier claimed that 'no one possessed of more information respecting Java than myself' (Raffles, *Memoir of the Life*, 195), proudly entitled his work *The History of Java*, lending it a final, definitive and exhaustive tone. By contrast, Crawfurd – like Marsden – entitled his contribution *History of the Indian Archipelago*, which lent the work a less totalising air, despite the fact that he would later go on to write other major works on the kingdoms of Siam, Cochin-China and Ava. Between the two of them, Crawfurd was the more productive in terms of his research and scholarly output. While Raffles had focused almost exclusively on Java in his attempt to claim the island (and its people and history) for himself, Crawfurd had cast his net wider by locating Java in the context of a larger archipelago, and his works brought together the kingdoms of Java, Siam, Burma and Cochin-China into a region that would later be called Southeast Asia. Long before Alfred Russel Wallace had even coined the term 'the Malay archipelago' (in the title of his book *The Malay Archipelago* (1869)), it was in fact John Crawfurd who had connected the dots and brought the region together as 'the Indian archipelago', a region which was distinct from India proper (Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago*; Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy... Ava*; and Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy... Siam and Cochin-China*).

99 Raffles, 'On the Melayu Nation'.

What set Raffles slightly apart from his fellow company men was his desire to be seen as more than just a coloniser-conqueror; and his scholarly pretensions were made clear by the publication of his book. Yet it is here that Raffles was perhaps at his most complex and hypocritical: For the man who had accused the Javanese and Dutch of neglecting Java's past was himself a purloiner of antiquities. Alatas, Carey and Hannigan have written about the prized manuscripts, statues and items of courtly regalia that were pilfered by Raffles and the British troops during the invasion and about how some of these objects – such as the Sangguran stone inscription of 929 AD and the Pacungan inscription of 1041 – were stolen or 'gifted' to higher-ranking members of the company, such as Lord Minto, to end up languishing in faraway places like the India Museum in Calcutta and the Scottish borderlands today.[100] Back in England the final touches to the image of Raffles as a man of learning was put down by the painter George Francis Joseph, in whose painting – which was completed in 1817, the same year as *The History of Java* – can be seen an image of the statue of the goddess Mamakhi that was taken from the thirteenth-century Candi Jago temple in East Java.[101]

The History of Java that was among the results of the British *entr'acte* turned out to be one of the lasting legacies of Raffles' work, but it has to be remembered that this was a work that was produced during the age of empire and that its purpose was to assemble together all known and knowable units of data and organise them within a comprehensive order of knowledge and power that served the ends of colonialism. If *entropy* – the explosion of disorganised data – would later be the bugbear that rocked the imperial archive as Richards has argued, there were no signs of it in Raffles' work at least.[102] *The History of Java* that he wrote left no room for hazy ambiguity: Like the 'Regulations of 1814' which he introduced that policed and restricted the movement of the people of Java, Raffles' *History of Java* was a totalising work that connected the dots between the past and the present of the island, locking the territory of Java into a communicating grid of interconnected towns and cities, camps and barracks, where imperial power could be projected to every corner of the island at a moment's notice. The Eurocentric perspective of *The History of*

100 Alatas, *Thomas Stamford Raffles;* Carey, *The British in Java, 1811-1816*; Hannigan, *Raffles and the British Invasion of Java.* See Carey, Sidomulyo and Griffiths, 'The Kolkata (Calcutta) Stone'.
101 Interview with Peter Carey, Jakarta, 6 February 2016. Also see Jordaan, 'Nicolaus Engelhard and Thomas Stamford Raffles'.
102 Richards, *The Imperial Archive*.

Java and its author are evident in the how the work appropriates the people, land and history of Java for the use of the company, and the way in which it negates the native Javanese understanding of their own relationship with the terrain and the cosmos surrounding it. In this regard, it was a truly *British* account of Java's history, which reveals much about how the British *viewed* and *understood* Java; bringing us – as the poet T.S. Eliot put it – 'back to where we started, which was the beginning', namely the colonial enterprise itself.[103]

103 Eliot, 'Little Gidding'.

5 Dressing the Cannibal: John Anderson's Sumatra as Market

> The British may not have created the longest-lived empire in history, but it was certainly one of the most data-intensive.[1]
>
> – Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and Fantasy of the Empire* (1993)

5.a Pleasing the Company: John Anderson's Search for Sumatran Clients

> The idea of travel as a means of gathering and recording information is commonly found in societies that exercise a high degree of political power. The traveller begins his journey with the strength of an empire sustaining him – albeit from a distance – militarily, economically, intellectually; he feels compelled to note down his observations in the awareness of a particular audience: his fellow country-men.[2]
>
> – Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of the Orient* (1988)

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Stamford Raffles' *History of Java* was in many respects a self-serving piece of work. The fact that Raffles did not spare the Dutch any of his criticism tells us something about who he was writing for: *The History of Java* was dedicated to the Prince Regent, and it sought to ingratiate Raffles and elevate him in the eyes of the members of the East India Company and British society in general. The work was *not* written to please the Dutch, or to enlighten the Javanese; it was meant to please the company that employed the author and to impress the society he sprung from.

That Raffles wrote for a specific public was not astonishing either: The language-game of nineteenth century racialised colonial-capitalism was a language-game that was confined to a particular community of language-users; and those who used that language understood its rules and how the language-game was meant to be played. The rules of that language-game remained relatively fixed throughout the nineteenth

1 Richards, *The Imperial Archive*, 4.

2 Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, xi.

century, and its workings were predictable, as rules are wont to be. Thus it comes as no surprise that even after the failure of the Java expedition, and after Raffles had been despatched to Bencoolen as penance for his misdeeds (in the eyes of the company and his rivals), the proponents of colonial-capitalism continued to present him in a positive light: The January 1819 issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine* recounted Raffles' return to the East Indies in glowing terms, depicting the man as active and energetic and eager to discover as much as he could about the island of Sumatra for the greater glory of England and the East India Company.[3] And in the same way that the prospects of Java had been inflated by those who were partisan to the invasion of the island, the potential benefits of Sumatra were talked up, too, presenting it as 'a country highly cultivated, and abounding in precious metals; and it is in the Governor's opinion, that far greater resources are to be found in Sumatra than the British could have had in Java'.[4] (Though it ought to be remembered that William Marsden, in his account of Sumatra that was published in 1783, had claimed that Sumatra's fortunes had declined and that it was no longer the emporium of the East that it once was.[5])

That is was now Sumatra's turn to be praised as a land of infinite bounty and abundance was hardly a surprise, for by that time the public in Europe was regaled with tales of fortune and prospects beyond their shores; and in some cases – such as the fabulous and incredible account of the land of Poyais that was said to be ruled by the self-styled *Cazique* General Gregor

3 In a lengthy account based on letters received from the East Indies, the magazine noted that 'Sir Thomas [sic] Raffles, the Governor of Fort Marlborough, has displayed his characteristic energy and activity since his arrival in Sumatra, and has anxiously endeavoured to extend the British influence over the whole of that valuable and extensive island. Sumatra has hitherto been very little known. The population of the interior were considered savages, and the mountains impassable'. The report apparently fails to note the work by William Marsden on Sumatra, and the fact that Marsden's book had been republished in 1811. It continued thus: 'The Governor has penetrated into the interior, and the result has been the discovery of a country highly cultivated, and abounding in precious metals; and it is in the Governor's opinion, that far greater resources are to be found in Sumatra than the British could have had in Java'. The report also added that the Dutch had once again attempted to thwart British ambitions in the region by sending an armed force to dethrone the Sultan of Palembang who had signed a treaty with the British earlier. It glowered that 'the British character was insulted and degraded in the grossest terms, and Governor Raffles had personally protested against the pretensions and principles on which the Dutch act in the Eastern Seas' ('Abstract of Foreign Occurences', 70-71).

4 Ibid., 70.

5 Marsden, *The History of Sumatra*, i-ii.

MacGregor[6] – it didn't even seem to matter if these lands actually existed or not.

The gilding that was being plastered all over Sumatra at the time was thus in keeping with the manner in which many parts of the non-Western world were being portrayed then: Since the publication of Said's *Orientalism*,[7] there has been much work done by successive generations of scholars who have looked at the manner through which Asia has been imagined and reconstructed in the popular imaginary of the West. Again, it is worth reminding the modern reader that the writings that were produced then – in books, newspapers and magazines – reflected the common sensibilities that were at work at the time: nineteenth-century Europe was a world that was defined and shaped by nationalism, capitalism and pseudo-scientific racism, and the prejudices of men like Raffles were typical of the time and the institutions they served.

The East India Company, in turn, was an institution that unabashedly promoted colonialism and capitalism simultaneously, and its success was in no small measure due to the intense competition that it encouraged against other rival nations and companies, as well as among its employees. To that end, pleasing the company was a prerequisite for advancement up its ranks, and those who shined in the eyes of the company directors were those who were most determined to add to the company's profits and the prestige of the nation. The conquest of Java for territory and profit was in keeping with the ethos of the company, as was Raffles' deliberate attempt to present Java as an

6 Dubbed by some as the greatest conman of the nineteenth century, Gregor MacGregor was a Scotsman, born in Stirlingshire, who had initially served in the British army but who was later discharged in 1810, before the end of the Napoleonic Wars. He had seen active service in Portugal, and upon his return to Scotland assumed the identity of a nobleman before he decided to travel to South America where the Venezuelan War of Independence was raging. Though he met with some success in Venezuela, MacGregor was keen to gain more for himself. In 1821 he returned to London after assuming the title of Cazique (Prince) of Poyais – a fictional territory that was meant to lie somewhere along the Honduran coast. In London MacGregor put forth the 'Poyais Scheme', an elaborate ruse to lure credulous investors and speculators to invest in the creation of a kingdom under his rule, complete with a parliament, constitution, government departments and an army, all of which he invented. So elaborate was MacGregor's scheme that he even had fake Poyanaise currency printed for him in Scotland. Poyais was described as a land of boundless opportunity, and MacGregor managed to dupe many investors, some of whom were members of rich and powerful families, to invest in his grand project for the colonisation of Central America. The scheme was eventually exposed and MacGregor was detained and arrested in Paris in 1825, after which we was put on trial. He was acquitted of fraud, and he later returned to South America, where he was made a citizen of Venezuela. He died in 1845 and was buried in Caracas.

7 Said, *Orientalism*.

antique land that was in need of modernisation and preservation. For the rest of the nineteenth century similar strategies for conquest – both territorial and epistemic – would be employed by the colonial-capitalists of the companies of Europe; and just as Java had been reconfigured by Raffles so would other parts of Southeast Asia be epistemically arrested and represented by his fellow company men. One of the lesser-known members of the company was John Anderson, and in his writings the island of Sumatra would likewise come under the regime of knowledge and power of the Honourable East India Company.

The company was many things to many people: Fundamentally a commercial concern, it was also a securitised entity with military capabilities that acted on its own interests as well as the empire by extension. At the same time it also provided the opportunity structures for men-on-the-make who sought upward social mobility at a time when much of British Georgian (and later Victorian) society was still marked by distinctions of class and invisible walls and ceilings that determined the subject-position and social standing of many ordinary folk. The ever-expansive stage of empire provided the opportunities that were not as abundant back home, and for men of quotidian means and backgrounds like Stamford Raffles, it opened up new vistas for personal reinvention. Raffles was not alone in his desire for recognition: A contemporary of his was John Anderson, who would play his part in the configuration of a corner of Southeast Asia through the publication of his *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra in MDCCCXXIII, under the Direction of the Government of Prince of Wales Island* (1826).

John Anderson (1795-1845) was born in Scotland and had begun his career in the East Indies early in his life. He joined the East India Company in 1813, and slowly made his way up the company hierarchy by becoming a warehouse-keeper and also a Malay translator by the early 1820s. By 1823 he had obtained the rank of junior merchant in the company and was able to negotiate deals on behalf of the board of directors based in Penang (sometimes referred to as Prince of Wales Island, with its capital in Georgetown). He was later promoted to senior merchant, and, eventually, was made the justice of the peace in Penang. In 1830 he returned to England, where he died in 1845. Apart from his *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra*, he published several accounts of the political and economic considerations of the East India Company with regard to the Malay states of the Peninsula between 1823 to 1825.[8]

8 See Anderson, *History of the East Coast of Sumatra*, *Further Papers Regarding the Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra*, and *Penang Government Transmit to London*.

Though Anderson's name has been all but forgotten in the annals of colonial romance and the popular imaginary – he hardly cut a romantic figure, by any standards – he was in many respects the quintessential company man *par excellence*. Ambitious in his work, pedestrian in his exertion, meticulous in his calculations and excruciatingly dull in his writing, he was an embodiment of what the ideal company man was meant to be: A loyal, dedicated data-seeker who sought any and every means to extend the company's market to the most remote corners of the world – and Anderson's corner was destined to be Sumatra.

5.b *A-Data-Mining We Will Go*: John Anderson Embarks on His Fact-Finding Mission to Sumatra

> How far I have successfully executed the laborious task assigned to me, I leave to an indulgent government to determine, disclaiming any pretensions to scientific acquirements, and boasting of nothing more than a moderate share of industry and perseverance.[9]
>
> – John Anderson, *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra* (1826)

To fully appreciate John Anderson's contribution to the study of Sumatra, and the role that he played in Britain's commercial dealings with the polities of Southeast Asia at the time, we need to place him in historical context. By the time that he was serving as a company official in Penang in the early 1820s, Britain had lost possession of Java. Britain's departure from Java meant that the East India Company's operations were then mainly confined to Penang, Malacca and later Singapore and Bencoolen. Further to the northwest, the First Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-1826 would extend the power of the East India Company and the Anglo-Indian government to Burma, though at that stage it was still unclear as to whether Burma posed a genuine threat to British power, which was based in Calcutta. Sumatra had not, at that time, come entirely under the control of the Dutch, and as Bosma has noted, British merchants were just as eager to spread their trading networks there.[10] From the vantage point of Penang, where Anderson

9 Anderson, *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra*, xxi.

10 Bosma notes that 'an important feature of the first decades of the 19th century was the British presence in colonial Indonesia. Census data and immigration records from Java demonstrate that British trading houses present on Java in the early 19th century continued to play an important

was based, the prospect of opening new trade relations across the Malacca Straits and exporting British goods to the markets of East Sumatra must have appeared tempting indeed.

It should be noted here that Anderson lived and worked half a century before Britain's 'forward movement' would propel the British further inland into the Malay Peninsula and before the British would intervene directly in the governance of the Malay kingdoms there. As such, there was the pressing need for the company to establish as many trading relations with as many local commercial centres as possible. It was to that end that Anderson was directed by the company to seek out new markets and commercial relations with the polities in Sumatra – an island that had been praised in the reports despatched by Raffles from Bencoolen, and which was said to have even more commercial potential than Java.[11]

Like Raffles, Anderson's success up to that point was partly due to the patronage he had secured via influential friends and mentors. He dedicated his account of Sumatra to Sir John Rae Reid, whose father had bestowed him 'liberal patronage' for ten years while he was stationed in Penang and to whom he felt some degree of obligation and gratitude. He noted in his dedication that the objects of his mission were manifold, 'but the principle were the extension of commerce, and the introduction of British manufactures into regions but little known, though abounding with inhabitants, and rich in the most valuable productions', and that he hoped that his work would 'ultimately prove beneficial to the commercial interests of this settlement'.[12] Ambitious though Anderson's project was, and wide though the scope of his interests, the reader is given no warning as to how dull the narrative that follows would be.

How John Anderson came to be chosen for the expedition was one of the very few instances of contingency that enter his work: In May 1820 a mission was planned to chart out the coast of East Sumatra, and to gather information about the kingdoms that lined the coast. The expedition was led by Mr Ibbetson of the company and Captain Crooke.[13] As fate would

role in the development of the local production of tropical goods, and that the emerging plantation economy attracted a modest influx of technicians and employees from various European nations' (Bosma, 'Emigration').

11 'Abstract of Foreign Occurences', 70-71.

12 Anderson, *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra*, xviii-xix.

13 The full transcript of the company's mission for Ibbetson was included in the second appendix at the end of Anderson's work (ibid., 361-386). In the appended document, it was clear that the board of directors of the East India Company had wished Ibbetson to lead an expedition for the expressed purpose of gauging the possibility of enhancing trade with the Malay and Batak

have it, the mission was called off, and as Anderson notes: 'The best planned schemes, however, are often defeated by unforeseen accidents."[14] Ibbetson fell ill and the mission was halted, after having visited only the ports of Jambi, Assahan (Asahan) and Delli (Deli). Ibbetson was rushed to Singapore for medical treatment, while the ship that carried him returned to Penang.

Ibbetson's unfinished report did not impress the head commissioner based in Penang, for it was 'altogether of a most discouraging nature, and represents the state of all the countries, both those which he visited and those he did not visit, in a very unfavourable light; the inhabitants being, according to this account, universally addicted to piracy, and subsisting wholly on plunder'.[15] Anderson obviously had a point here, when he noted that Ibbetson had pronounced judgement upon *all* the native communities and accused them of piracy – despite the fact that he had not visited some of the communities and was thus unable to provide evidence to back up his claims. It was to make up for this gap in knowledge that Anderson – who confessed of having better knowledge of the East Sumatran merchants who visited Penang[16] – volunteered for the task of attempting a second sortie to Sumatra in 1823.

Before he proceeded with his own account of the settlements in East Sumatra, Anderson concluded his introduction with a solemn vow that he had undertaken the 'laborious task' assigned to him – despite his lack of 'scientific acquirements' – and that he would relate the information he obtained 'as directed by the instructions of the former agents, "in the most simple language, so that the supreme authorities may have the opportunity, as well as this government, of forming their own conclusions"'. The net result was an account of East Sumatra filled to the brim with detail and acute observations, but almost entirely devoid of humour, drama or flair; and a

communities in East Sumatra, and Ibbetson had been directed to sound out the local rulers on the following points: Their attitude towards the East India Company; their attitude towards the Dutch East Indies Company; their willingness to formally enter into trading relations with the English; common perceptions, for and against, towards the English and the Dutch; the main centres of production and commerce; the state of political affairs in the Malay kingdoms; the power of the local rulers and their courts; the power of rival contenders to the respective rulers, and their military capabilities; the state of political stability and security in the kingdoms; their relations with each other; the state of security in the interior, including in the Batak lands; the state of economic development there; the main articles of manufacture in the local economies; goods and materials produced; goods and materials that were desired and may be exported there by the company; etc.

14 Ibid., xviii-xix.

15 Ibid., xix.

16 Ibid., xxi.

work that has gone down in the history of writings on Southeast Asia as perhaps one of the driest ever produced, which must have tested the nerves of many a reader since its publication.

5.c *Carefully Does It*: Anderson's Careful Research on Sumatra

> You've got to be careful if you don't know where you are going, because you might not get there.[17]
>
> – Yogi Berra

Anderson was at pains to state again and again that he was no expert, and that he had no specialised knowledge as a historian or sociologist. Conscientious to a fault, he covered his bases by opening his work with copious references to the most well-known expert on Sumatra then, William Marsden – whose work *A History of Sumatra* (1783) was at the time one of the very few works of any note on the subject.[18] Footnotes 1 to 7 between pages xi to xvii of his introduction refer to Marsden's work, and outlines the discoveries that had been made by Marsden with regards to the kingdoms of Aceh, Butar, Deli and Siak. Anderson was careful not to tread on hallowed ground where Marsden's imprint was still visible to all, and he chose instead to focus on areas that had been hitherto understudied at the time, preferring to quietly go where few had gone before. (It is also interesting to note that Anderson does not accord the same respect or acknowledgement to the two leading English writers on the East Indies at the time, namely Stamford Raffles and John Crawfurd, whose works on Java and the East Indies had been published by then.[19])

The expedition began in Penang with the purchase (and re-naming) of the Brig *Jessy*, which was armed with eight guns (two of them twelve-pounders) and crewed by more than sixty men of twenty different nationalities. Anderson was given his letter of commission and letters of introduction to 'the Kejuman Muda, Rajah of Langkat; Sultan Panglima of Delli; Sri Sultan Ahmut of Bulu China; Sultan Besar of Sirdang; Nunku Bindihara and Pangulus of Batu Bara; Jang de per Tuan, or Rajah, of Assahan: King

17 Berra, *When You Come to a Fork in the Road, Take It!*, 53.

18 Marsden, *The History of Sumatra* (1783).

19 Raffles, *The History of Java*, and Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago*.

of Siack; Rajah of Salengore'.[20] The *Jessy* embarked without fanfare, and in keeping with its understated departure Anderson's narrative at this stage of the journey was lavished with references nautical and navigational, hardly designed to affect any enthusiasm on the part of the reader.

Bookish Anderson did not have to wait long before he found reason to complain: Four days into the journey he discovered that his Portuguese captain and his pilot did not, after all, understand English and had no idea of where they were going and what they were doing along the East coast of Sumatra. (An odd admission on Anderson's part, considering that they had been at sea for several days and that he was the one who hired the captain and the pilot.) The captain's Portuguese maps proved to be inaccurate and out-of-date, though Anderson smugly noted that he had brought his own *English* maps that were up to the task.[21] Admonishing his Portuguese captain for his 'gross ignorance' and his 'perfect inability to carry the vessel in safety', Anderson begins to plug the epistemic gap as soon as they land at Deli and begin to move upriver.[22]

Here is where Anderson's data-collecting began: His account of Deli was comprehensive in the manner that it touched upon the internal politics of that kingdom that seemed, to him, on the verge of a 'disastrous revolution' and where the ruler – then facing internal opposition from errant local lords – was keen to seek trade with Britain.[23] Anderson took note of the local economy of Deli, the condition of its markets, and jotted out its products and imports. But Anderson also surveyed the lay of the land, and charted the waterways and the river that connected Deli to the interior, having embarked on a small expedition upriver with a small band of men. He measured the depth of the river and estuary at several points, noting in his text parts of the river that would be dangerous for larger vessels, and where entry could be gained by smaller boats.[24] Undeterred by the fact that a civil war was in full swing, Anderson proceeded inland to meet the other lords and nobles who had risen up against the Sultan Panglima of Deli. From Kampung Ilir to Kampung Besar to Kota Bangun, Anderson parleyed with as many local leaders and warlords as he could, while noting that many of their troops were of Batak origin.[25] Despite having previously made overtures to the ruler of Deli, Anderson – forever the company man on the lookout

20 Anderson, *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra*, 2.
21 Ibid., 7.
22 Ibid., 9.
23 Ibid., 10.
24 Ibid., 10-13.
25 Ibid., 22-32.

for new commercial partners for the firm – also negotiated on the side with some of the local rebel leaders who had likewise expressed a desire to do business with the British.

Anderson reported his findings with an air of detachment throughout, and even when he encountered a Batak cannibal – who boasted that he had eaten four of his enemies – Anderson's description of the man-munching warrior focused less on the man's dietary preferences and more on the details of his clothes, down to his blue cotton shirt and Acehnese trousers.[26] A little further on, he gives an account of the Sultan of Kota Bangun's personal army, which consisted of around 400, 'one-third of them at least such savages as I have been describing. Their food consists of the flesh of tigers, elephants, hogs, snakes, dogs, rats, or whatever offal they can lay their hands upon. Having no religion, they fear neither God nor man. They believe that when they die, they shall become wind. Many of them, however, are converted to Islamism; but the older people, who have been accustomed to feast upon human flesh, and other delicacies of that sort, have an aversion to the Mahometan faith, as they cannot afterwards enjoy themselves.'[27]

With nary a pause, Anderson moved effortlessly from cannibalism to horticulture and described in turn the pepper plantations nearby, 'that are kept beautifully clean, and clear from grass'; the merits of the Jahar, Binjai, Mentubong and Kallumpang tree – the wood of the last being favoured for the making of coffins (though presumably coffins would have been no use to the Bataks who did not bury the dead but ate them instead) as well as the Bunga Dedap tree, whose stem was pounded to make charcoal for gunpowder.[28] Novel though the gruesome menu of the Bataks might have been, Anderson was clearly more interested in the agricultural products their land had to offer.

Throughout the narrative Anderson's penchant for commerce is clearly evident. He wanted to meet Rajah Sebaya Lingah in order to persuade the ruler to accept the use of British currency[29] and was keen to go deeper inland than any Englishman before him to find out what the area had to offer in terms of local produce. On the way to Kampung Ilir he came across Sumatran elephants, and he was convinced that ivory could be collected if only the civil war would come to an end and if men from Queda (Kedah) could be brought over – for Kedahans were known for their elephant-snaring

26 Ibid., 34.
27 Ibid., 35.
28 Ibid., 36.
29 Ibid., 37.

capabilities.[30] Along the way he noted the various uses of the local plants and trees that he came across, such as the Sukkat (or Salimbar), Bubua and the Daun Ibas.[31] Again, Anderson's interests were primarily commercial, as he noted the value and uses of these woods and plants and how they could be traded for British goods.

Unrelenting in his professional conduct, Anderson repeats the same tiresome ritual of greeting the local rulers whom he bestows gifts of European cloth, such as Sri Sultan Ahmad of Kullumpang.[32] But it is clear that these rites and rituals were not merely ceremonial, for Anderson was also attempting to gauge the extent to which the natives of Sumatra were attracted to European chintz and other products. Slowly, as his narrative proceeds, the reader begins to intuit the intention of Anderson, who was basically on a scouting mission to ascertain to what extent Sumatra could be opened up for trade with England, and whether English cloth could be used as a means to break into the local market. He lamented the 'indolence of the natives' who 'gained a subsistence with little trouble or exertion',[33] but noted that should the land be opened up for commercial cultivation the natives of East Sumatra would have the means to spend their earnings of cloth and other goods imported from Britain, for 'almost all the Battas [Bataks] whom I saw here were dressed in these cloths; and some few had *bajoos* or jackets of European chintz or white cloth. Nothing but the want of means prevented them from all wearing European cloth, to which lately they have all become very partial.'[34]

Anderson's account plodded along its own laborious pace as he navigated the Bulu China, Terusan Dulmanack and Belouai Rivers. As in the case of his earlier survey of the river delta around Deli, his account was full of nautical references and measurements related to the depth and width of these rivers at different points. At Batubara he noted that civil unrest was still a problem that remained unsolved, but that the local population was eager to see hostilities come to an end. As he surveyed the state of the local economy there, Anderson soon came to the conclusion that British trade with East Sumatra would be favourable indeed, and that Britain would be able to export its cloth products to the area in exchange for precious commodities such as gambier, pepper and other spices, as well as precious

30 Ibid., 40.
31 Ibid., 41.
32 Ibid., 60.
33 Ibid., 51.
34 Ibid., 52.

woods and ivory. At Siak he was pleased to learn that the rajah had not reneged on the promises he had made with Colonel Farquhar in 1818, and that (better still) the Dutch had not been given an opportunity to set up a trading post there.[35]

By his own account, John Anderson regarded his mission to the east coast of Sumatra a resounding success.[36] The human cost was borne by the crew of the *Jessy*, not least by the pilot (who could not read English maps), who died along the way. The death of the pilot did irk Anderson somewhat, for it compelled him to direct his vessel to Selangor, and then Malacca, in search of a replacement; but the short detour did not detract him from accomplishing his mission. Throughout the journey the *Jessy*'s guns were never been fired in anger, and despite the rumours of cannibalism and piracy that were said to be widespread, all he had to countenance were the mosquitoes of Sumatra.

In his journal, Anderson noted with an air of quiet triumph that he had succeeded in going further than any company official before him. (Nearly seventy years later, the same self-congratulatory tone would be detected in the writings of the young Hugh Clifford, who, after his grand survey-tour of the Malay kingdoms of Pahang, Trengganu and Kelantan, would proclaim that he had single-handedly added 15,000 square miles of territory to the British Empire.[37]) For both Anderson and Hugh Clifford, the extension of

35 Ibid., 165.

36 The final entry to Anderson's account of the mission reads thus: 'Made all sail for Pinang [Penang], which we reached by the 9th of April [1823], having been absent exactly three months. Only one casualty happened during the voyage, and not a single accident of any kind; and I had occasion to punish only two men slightly, for sleeping during their watch. Though we encountered some severe weather, and the navigation in some parts was extremely difficult, the vessel did not touch ground, lose a spar, or split a sail; and in all these points, I may with truth say that no expedition was ever brought to a termination under more happy circumstances' (ibid., 190).

37 The similarities between John Anderson and Hugh Clifford are striking indeed. Both men started out as low-ranking functionaries of the East India Company, Clifford beginning his career in his late teens as a mere cadet. Both of them were meticulous in their research, and both were keen on pushing back the horizon of knowledge at the time. Like Anderson, Clifford was also worried about the political disturbances in Pahang, Trengganu and Kelantan, and like Anderson, he, too, felt that commerce could be encouraged if hostilities would cease. Clifford is credited for being one of the first Englishmen to map out the territories of Pahang, Trengganu and Kelantan – which he did with a company of twenty-three Malays from Pahang. But unlike Anderson, who evidenced no literary flair whatsoever, Clifford also dabbled in fiction writing and produced a string of short stories that were set in Pahang. Clifford's fictional stories set in the Malayan Peninsula contrasted starkly to his official reports and surveys, which were monotonous and factual in character. His fiction is full of romantic allusions to Pahang as the 'final frontier' between the British-controlled territories of the Peninsula and the 'darker'

the horizon of knowledge was also an extension of British commercial influence and colonial power; and the march of epistemology and empire went hand-in-hand. Of the Deli River region Anderson noted that 'this place has never been visited by Europeans, nor is its name to be found in any chart extant.'[38] And of the Bulu China river region he remarked that 'during the seventeen days that the vessel has been in the river, I have visited the principal places in Delli (Deli), have gone up the Bulu China and Sirdang Rivers, and have penetrated into the pepper countries in three different directions; have seen and conversed with all the principal chiefs in these districts, both Malays and Battas (Bataks). I have collected all the information I possibly could from intelligent natives, comparing it as I had an opportunity.'[39]

Contented as he was, there was some justification for Anderson's gentle boast, for he had indeed pushed back the horizon of knowledge of Sumatra at that time. This was ground-level fieldwork and data-collection of the first order, done by a data-collector working on the field. Yet despite his detailed account of the communities and economies of Sumatra that he visited, precious little was ever written about Anderson by the man himself.

5.d Sumatra Surveyed: The Perceptible Gaze of the Invisible John Anderson

> The Rajah asked me if I was not afraid. I replied that I was rather a predestinarian.[40]
>
> – John Anderson, *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra* (1826)

Apart from his own admission that he possessed a 'moderate share of industry and perseverance'[41] at the beginning of his work, we learn almost

realms of the Malay kingdoms that were still independent. Again and again in his short stories Clifford emphasised the vastness of Asia and the 'frontier mentality' that was prevalent among the first Western explorers and traders who ventured into Pahang, treating the state as if it was the 'Wild West' of the Malay world. See Clifford, 'A Journey to the Malay States of Trengganu and Kelantan'. For a detailed account of British intervention into Pahang, see Gopinath, *Pahang, 1880-1933*.

38 Anderson, *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra*, 79.

39 Ibid., 90, 97.

40 Ibid., 169.

41 Ibid., xxi.

nothing about John Anderson, the company official and author of *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra*. Whatever fears, hopes and prejudices he may have harboured are absent in the text, as he guided the reader along his own expedition to Sumatra. The only instances where the author revealed a little of himself is when he expressed his irritation at the mosquitoes that plagued his journey across Sumatra – though even then, the indefatigable data-collector in him could not help but deal with the subject in some detail, enumerating the frequency of their nightly attacks, the size of the mosquitoes and the varying degrees of viciousness of his winged tormentors.[42]

The 'distancing effect' that Anderson affected in his writing was hardly accidental, and he maintained it even in his accounts of his interactions with the people of Sumatra. Constantly down-playing his own agency and will, he continued to maintain the air of a detached observer, a passing witness to events that unfolded before his eyes. When the *Jessy* arrived at Siak, the last major port of call during the expedition, Anderson was greeted by the king and his court. His account of the meeting he had with them revealed something of Anderson's own unassuming nature and his reluctance to admit his private feelings:

> The greatest surprise was expressed by all the chiefs, and the King in particular, on being informed that I had penetrated into the Batta [Batak] country. He said, addressing the surrounding multitude, 'Ah, this is the way the English manage: The Dutch dared not do this.' Even many of the old chiefs who were present, and had been engaged in the wars at Assahan, Delli, and other places conquered by the Rajah of Siack [Siak], had never ascended as far as I did, and made very particular enquiries relative to the population of the Batta states, etc. *The Rajah asked me if I was not afraid. I replied that I was rather a predestinarian, and that there was a time appointed for all to die;* that as I went with pacific intentions, and *merely to devise means for improving the commerce and the condition of the countries I visited,* I felt no apprehensions, conscious that my motives only required to be known to be appreciated; and that, being fond of travelling, I wished also to satisfy a rational curiosity. (Emphasis mine)[43]

42 The vexing topic of mosquitoes and other pesky insects pops up again and again in Anderson's work, and it was clear that there was no love lost between them. References to mosquitoes are found on ibid., 20, 27, 43, 54-55, 56, 81, 141, etc.

43 Ibid., 169-170.

Scholars of Southeast Asia who hope to gain deeper knowledge of the history, culture and norms of Sumatran society may be sorely disappointed by Anderson's offering, for in that regard the author had failed to deliver. But in his defence, Anderson himself had clearly stated from the outset that he was no historian or expert on Sumatran society; and nor was his account of the mission to East Sumatra meant to be taken as an authoritative work on the subject. (In this sense, his homage to the doyen Marsden at the introduction of his work served as a useful literary device that shielded him from any accusation of having scholarly pretensions of any kind; for he had made it clear that he was not attempting an academic work of the same erudite level.)

Anderson's account of the mission to Sumatra was precisely that: An account of an exploratory mission to a part of the East Indies that was little known, and with the objective of ascertaining the viability of trade with the native polities there. All he offered was a narrative of the trip to Sumatra in a dry, matter-of-fact, humourless manner. Even his treatment of the political crisis affecting the Kingdom of Deli leaves much to be desired, for he offered next to nothing when it comes to the history of Deli, the causes of the revolt against the Sultan Pangiran, and the motivations of the rebellious lords and nobles. The same holds true of his account of Siak, and the intrigues among the local chiefs against the rajah there. True to his word, he collected the various accounts of the conflicts and rivalries as they were related to him by the lords, chiefs and kings he interviewed and presented them at face value, with no judgement on his part – preferring instead, as he noted in the introduction, to allow the directors of the East India Company to come to their own conclusion. (Whether the directors of the company were any wiser after reading his report is something we can only speculate about.)

Anderson does not offer us a study of the peoples and communities of East Sumatra either, beyond his superficial observation that the natives were generally indolent and unenterprising, and the Bataks superstitious. Though here it should be noted that Anderson's judgement was *economic* in tone and tenor, and formed as a result of commercial calculations that were taking place in his mind.[44] In this regard Anderson's moral universe

44 John Anderson's economic concerns were not exclusive to himself, but shared by another native company official, the Malaccan-based scribe Munshi Abdullah Abdul Kadir. Munshi Abdullah was the translator and scribe to Stamford Raffles and other company officials in Malacca and Singapore, and in time he internalised the same values of his employers and superiors in the company. In his work *Kisah Pelayaran ke Timur* (Journey to the East Coast of the Malay Peninsula), Abdullah noted that the kingdoms of Pahang, Trengganu and Kelantan were likewise caught in the grip of civil conflict, which in turn rendered their local economies

was similar to that of his contemporaries, like Raffles – who likewise disapproved of wasteful habits and pursuits like gambling on the grounds that they contributed to the weakening of local economies.

John Anderson's main concern was that the people of Sumatra were not economically productive – at least not by his standards – and that as long as they remained so they would not have the capacity to purchase goods that Britain may wish to offer them, in order to open up the local markets for foreign capital penetration. When confronted by the Bataks and their cannibalistic ways, Anderson seemed less bothered by their habits and customs – that struck other European explorers and missionaries as barbaric and evil – than by the fact that they were not earning enough to buy the chintz that Britain was so keen to sell them. Presumably even cannibals deserved the best that British manufacturing could offer.

It was in the same vein that he tried to dispel the stories of piracy that had littered the accounts of East Sumatra until then – a backhanded refutation of the claims made by R. Ibbetson, whose mission earlier in 1820 proved to be a failure but whose alarmist report to the board of directors of the company was the cause of much unease. Though he was forced to admit that he personally discovered evidence of cannibalism among the Bataks, Anderson confidently added in his final report (appended to the journal) that its practice 'is rapidly decreasing, as civilisation and commerce are advancing'.[45]

He took the same dismissive tone when dealing with Ibbetson's reports of piracy among the Malays of Batubara when he insisted that 'if piracy exists at all, it must be to a very limited extent. *Their chiefs seem very much disposed to trade*, and too much engaged in hostilities in the interior with refractory chiefs, to be able to engage in piratical adventures' (emphasis mine).[46]

With nary a romantic bone in his body, Anderson was less enthralled by stories of murderous cannibals and bloodthirsty pirates, but certainly more enthusiastic about the commercial prospects he discovered there. In contrast to the alarmist tone of Ibbetson's earlier report, Anderson concluded his account of his stay in Siak with a glowing account of the

inert. Abdullah, like Anderson, regarded war as unproductive and calamitous to the economic health of society, and in his account of the kingdoms on the east coast of the Peninsula lamented the culture of feudal politics that allowed petty chieftains to constantly usurp and challenge the power of their rulers, keeping the communities in a perpetual state of unproductive crisis.

45 Anderson, *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra*, 224.

46 Ibid., 227-228.

hospitality of his hosts, who hardly fitted the image of the Asiatic pirate in his eyes:

> The reception I met at this place has made an impression upon my mind which will not easily be effaced. I never met anywhere with a more hearty welcome, all the people vying with each other in their kindly offices. *How different was the treatment I actually experienced, compared with what I anticipated. I expected to meet with a savage race of pirates, whom would receive me with jealousy and distrust. I must describe them, however, as I found them, hospitable and generous.* (Emphasis mine)[47]

As far as Anderson was concerned, Batubara, Siak and the Batak lands were all ripe for the picking, and the East India Company ought to have made every effort to expand its trading network to East Sumatra. He had presented the company with a broad and detailed survey of the polities he discovered; and rather than an account of the history, peoples and customs of East Sumatra, what Anderson produced was a political-economic report of the *market* of Sumatra, with all manner of precise information about the resources and opportunities that lay there for trade and enterprise. The anthropologist or sociologist may find his work wanting in many respects, but the goods merchant of his time would have been elated by his detailed accounts of pepper and gambier production, the list of rice, pepper, chilli and fruit plantations and orchards, the locations best suited for the extraction of minerals and ivory, etc.

If Anderson failed in giving us a better picture of the human condition in East Sumatra, it was because he wasn't really interested in human beings, but was more interested in what those humans were eating, buying, selling and producing instead. From a mercantilist's point of view – that Anderson adopted – *the Sumatran people were economic agents and actors, consumers and producers, first and foremost*. Their history, culture and morals were of secondary importance compared to their capacity for consumption and production.

In terms of economic data-mining, John Anderson's journal of his mission to East Sumatra is perhaps one of the earliest examples of such a study carried out in meticulous detail, by a company functionary who was in all respects the product of the commercial establishment he worked for. And it was here that the seemingly invisible, objective gaze of John Anderson stood out in bold relief, and where he revealed his own subject-position

47 Ibid., 185.

as a loyal servant of the British East India Company. For John Anderson's *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra* was above all a *company report*, written by a *company official*, for the *company* he worked for. Unlike the inveterate social climber Raffles, Anderson was less interested in the opinion of the chattering glitterati in their salons in London, and more keen to impress his company directors, whose approval he sought and to whom his book was dedicated.

5.e John Anderson and the Reconfiguration of Sumatra as a Market

Though John Anderson's *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra* (1826) remains one of the most vivid accounts of Sumatra that was produced in the nineteenth century, it is unclear whether it should be placed in the same category as Raffles *The History of Java* (1817) or Crawfurd's *History of the Indian Archipelago* (1820). All three works were produced by men who worked with and for the East India Company, and all three works are filled to the brim with detailed information about their respective regions. Yet Anderson's work stands in stark contrast to Raffles' in the manner in which is underplays the exotic and novel, and highlights instead the mundane and ordinary.

When the modern reader considers the logistical difficulties Anderson faced, working in the age of sail where possession of a good compass and accurate map would make all the difference between success and failure, his jaunt to East Sumatra does strike one as quite an adventure – despite his determination to squeeze every drop of excitement out of his arid account of the journey. Although some contemporary scholars, such as Said and Kabbani,[48] have written at length about how the discourse of nineteenth-century Orientalism had tended to present the non-Western Other in gendered terms that were often exotic, sensual and enticing, there is strikingly little sensuality or voluptuousness in Anderson's corporate report. Indeed, Anderson's desiccated account features almost no descriptions of Sumatran women at all – save for an aged female guide he met along the Deli region – and certainly no steamy accounts of native beauties coyly hiding behind banana trees. (Anderson seemed more excited by pepper orchards and paddy fields at any rate.)

48 Said, *Orientalism*; Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*.

It is noteworthy that Anderson's work came with several illustrations of Sumatra, its landscape and its people, all of which were as mundane and unexciting as his text: The depictions of the natives of Sumatra were of a matter-of-fact, uninteresting nature; and even the Batak cannibals illustrated in his work come across as disappointingly ordinary. By contrast, Crawfurd's account of his mission to Ava (in Burma),[49] which took place in the same year (1826) and was published three years later (1829), included the exotic images of a blue-faced woman of the Kayan tribe and the hair-raising 'wolfman' Shwe Maong, who would become the talk of the town in London.[50] Anderson, it appears, was less inclined towards the fantastic and bizarre – though he knew a good pepper plantation when he saw one.

In accounting for the difference in style and tenor between Anderson's writing and that of his contemporaries, some attention must be given to the author himself, and his aim in writing the work. Unlike Raffles, who had sought to transform himself from company man to a gentleman-scholar of Asia, Anderson was contented with his lot as a company functionary and evidently found pleasure in pleasing the company he worked for. His tool of analysis was economics, and in his writing what we find is not Bourdieu's *homo academicus* at work, but rather a *homo economicus* intrepidly labouring away. Here was a marriage between economics and epistemology: where Anderson was identifying, sifting, categorising and compartmentalising elements of raw data – names, places, dates, figures – within a vast system of interpretation where data was being turned into knowledge, and *useful, instrumental* knowledge at that.

Anderson's Sumatra was precisely that: *His* Sumatra, seen from the perspective of the man himself; and the object that he gazed upon was necessarily shaped by the gaze of the one who viewed it. In the same way that the discursive economy of Western missionaries of the time could only view the Bataks as heathens whose culture and beliefs were necessarily imbued with negativity (that could only be reversed through religious conversion), Anderson's discursive economy could only view that land and resources of Sumatra as capital, and its people as economic agents – albeit ones who were not as productive and enterprising as he wished them to be. The discursive economy of missionary activism, that had its own logic and teleology, finds a counterpart in Anderson's own market-informed discursive economy that was likewise guided by its own logic and values, and which in turn could only result in its own uniquely determined *idea* of

49 Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy... Ava*.

50 Bondeson, *Freaks*, 30-35, 156.

Sumatra. Both the missionary and Anderson may have been writing about Sumatra, but in their writings we are left with two very different views of the same thing – reminiscent of Heidegger's point about the sun being different things to different people and prompting the question: 'Which of these is the true sun? The sun of the shepherd, or the sun of the astrophysicist?'[51]

Anderson did not disguise his objectives, and he had made it abundantly clear that his data-collecting mission was one that was intended to serve an economic end: namely, the opening up of markets in East Sumatra and to induce the local rulers to trade with the East India Company. At one point in the narrative he expressed his elation when he managed to persuade the Shahbundar (Shahbandar) of Assahan to accept a payment of 360 dollars in the East India Company's currency of Penang, for it meant that the local chief was now able to trade with the company, 'which would afford them wonderful facilities, compared to what they enjoyed'.[52] The Shahbandar of Assahan was thus transformed from a *native other*, to a *potential customer* instantaneously – for as a result of this transaction he now possessed purchasing power.

Here is where Anderson's mode of economic analysis turned the people, resources and lands that he studied into economic agents and capital. In contrast to the studies that were then being carried out by European missionaries for whom the natives of Southeast Asia were lost souls in need of salvation through the Church, and whose imminent damnation justified the further penetration of the missionaries into their lands; Anderson's economic analysis portrayed the natives of Sumatra as a people who were industrially stagnant and wanting, but who could be redeemed into productive economic agents if only trade channels could be opened up and commerce further encouraged. Lockean in his condemnation of idleness – *not as a sin, but as a form of wastefulness* – Anderson's perspective was one that saw Sumatra in less exotic and romantic terms compared to the other explorers of his time. What he found was a vast land that was rich in natural resources but where commerce had not been able to flourish, and this pained the wandering company official greatly.[53]

51 Heidegger, 'The Everyday and Scientific Experience of the Thing', 13.

52 Anderson, *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra*, 122-123.

53 Apart from the repetitive mention of mosquitoes and other troublesome insects, Anderson's narrative is also replete with references to bare and empty markets, fields that were not being worked at full capacity, and wastage in general. Up the Deli River region he noted that 'in the villages there appeared to be an entire stagnation of trade; indeed, I may say, I did not see a single article for sale' (ibid., 17). While at Batubara he noted that there was a ready market for English cloth, 'for the people prefer wearing our European chintzes' (pp. 116-117), and he came

To that end, Anderson appended to his work a comprehensive survey of Sumatra and an appendix that were longer than his account of the mission itself, running from pages 191 to 423 of the book, elevating him to the status of *primus inter pares* in the pantheon of colonial nerds. It was here that the pen-pushing Anderson was able to shine, as the builder of a great columbarium of economic and financial data. He listed no less than 168 rivers, capes, points, islands, bays and straits that he had visited during his three-month-long journey[54]; the names and locations of thirty-six villages that he visited in the Batak lands around Langkat, and the total number of houses contained in all of them (13,560, by his count)[55]; the types of wood and bamboo to be found for cultivation and sale in the Batak and Malay lands; and other major agricultural goods that can be bought from the Batak and Malay villages – notably pepper, and the location of the best pepper plantations; other common articles of export such as salt, cotton, corn, tobacco, pulse, beans, gambier, rice, fruits of all kinds, resin, gum, wood, etc., and their prices at different centres of production; the major articles of import most needed and wanted in the Malay and Batak lands, such as cloth, iron, brass, utensils, gunpowder, arms, opium (the use of which he did not approve), chinaware, nails, etc., and their prices at different ports; and other bits of information vital to trade. (At one point in the appendix Anderson did mention in passing an old temple in the vicinity of Kota Bangun, but summarily brushed aside its importance as 'there were no records regarding this ancient fortification'.[56])

As far as *epistemic* claims go, John Anderson did indeed come to *know* Sumatra. But his claim to knowledge was one that was necessarily shaped by the tool that he used to see and analyse the object – economics – but this was and remains true of all other accounts of Sumatra that were written before and after him as well. Whether it be the historian's lens (of Marsden's, for example) or the missionary's, *Sumatra could only be known through some analytical framework*; and there were as many Sumatras as there were

to the same conclusion when he visited the Tubba [Toba] region where he observed that 'the chiefs had a partiality for our European chintzes, and particularly for scarlet broad cloth, of which they would have made purchase, had there been any for sale' (p. 151).

54 Ibid., 229-232.

55 Ibid., 242-244.

56 Ibid., 269. It is interesting to note that Anderson's text has no illustrations of ancient monuments whatsoever, in contrast to the illustrations found in the works of Raffles (*The History of Java*) and Crawfurd (*History of the Indian Archipelago*). The only illustrations of objects is one that features a rather dull-looking Batak house and the last lithograph that features a graphic representation of the various sorts of weapons used by the Malays and Bataks, including the Malay flintlock musket or *bedil istinggar*.

(and are) analytical frameworks available. John Anderson's description of Sumatra may strike some readers as being a more lucid and sober account compared to the romantic fluff that has been written by scores of romantic novelists in love with the 'exotic East', and perhaps less judgemental that the damning accounts of missionaries who saw in the land and its people nothing but evidence of heathen devilry; but it was, nonetheless, an account that was written by a company man whose pen was guided by considerations of profit and loss. Anderson had, in the end, mapped out the whole of eastern Sumatra, but his was an *economic map* that pointed to the most vital centres of trade, the most important areas of production, as well as the most populous areas that would be the biggest market for British goods. And even if Anderson had been careful in his research and analysis, and had taken steps to withdraw himself well into the background of the narrative he weaved, his presence could be read throughout the text: For this was a company man's view of the world, and the Sumatra that we see in his work had 'Anderson of the East India Company' written all over it.

6 Brooke, Keppel, Mundy and Marryat's Borneo as 'The Den of Pirates'

> Malaya, land of the pirate and the amok, your secrets have been well guarded, but the enemy has at last passed your gate, and soon the irresistible juggernaut of Progress will have penetrated to your remotest fastness, 'civilised' your people, and stamped them with the seal of a higher morality.[1]
>
> – Frank Swettenham, *Malay Sketches* (1895)

> There is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.[2]
>
> – Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (1955)

6.a Colonialism and the Necessity of the Pirate

> [James Brooke] became convinced that Borneo and the Eastern isles afforded an open field for enterprise and research. To carry to the Malay races, so long the terror of the European merchant-vessel, the blessings of civilisation.[3]
>
> – Henry Keppel, *The Expedition to Borneo of the* HMS Dido (1846)

Raffles' account of Java had romanticised the island and consigned it to the museum of empire, while Anderson's account of Sumatra had squeezed the island dry of any traces of the exotic while bringing it within the ambit of the East India Company's commercial concerns. In both cases, the works produced by the two men who belonged to the company had reconfigured the places they wrote about in no uncertain terms, rendering them known but also imbuing their identity with traits and features that were not necessarily there to begin with. Their writings were instances of cultural perspectivism made manifest, and yet despite the subjective bias that can be clearly read off the pages of their respective works, these were nonetheless accounts of Southeast Asia that gradually contributed to the idea of the place itself, making it up as they went along.

1 Swettenham, *Malay Sketches*.
2 Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 256.
3 Keppel, *Expedition to Borneo*, vol. 1, 3.

Here would be a timely juncture to raise again Said's notion of *instrumental fictions*, and how such fictions can and have indeed been of instrumental use in the past. Said's point – relevant today as it is for the past – is that fictions in themselves are not necessarily to be faulted if their epistemic claims fall off the mark: For what is equally important is how such fictions could have practical utility as well.

In the case of both Raffles and Anderson, theirs were discursive constructions of foreign lands and peoples that were approximations of the thing-in-itself, but more importantly these were constructions that fitted well within the logic of racialised colonial-capitalism. Both men were guided by their personal ambitions, to be sure; and both of them were also willing actors and agents in the larger project of empire-building. Though stylistically the works of Raffles and Anderson were worlds apart, both of them spoke and wrote according to the same rules of the language-game of nineteenth-century colonial-capitalism, and in that respect at least both of them were collaborators in the same enterprise.

As Western colonial power extended across the rest of the Southeast Asian archipelago, other parts of the region would likewise come under the same regime of power and knowledge that had reconfigured Java and Sumatra. Sitting between the British-controlled commercial centres of Penang and Singapore and Dutch-controlled Java was the island of Borneo (Kalimantan), and the story of how Borneo came to be redefined as the region's centre for piracy is the subject of this chapter. The story, of course, begins with a European adventurer whose romantic leanings were framed according to the oppositional dialectic of racial difference and cultural superiority. The net result would be a phantasmagoria of empire run riot, with pirates, headhunters and gunboats thrown into the bargain.

6.b Enter the Privateer: James Brooke Goes A-Hunting for a Kingdom to Call His Own

> I have been accused of everything from murder to merchandise.[4]
>
> – James Brooke, address in London, 30 April 1852

4 Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *A History of Sarawak*, 145.

> His temperament, though liberal in a broad sense, was not akin to most Victorian liberals, with its pious puritan background. He was an adventurer, and though generous and altruistic, an egoist.[5]
>
> – Steven Runciman, *The White Rajahs* (1960)

If Raffles and Anderson had been forced to work their way up the ranks of the East India Company and toil for public recognition back home, there were others who chose to avail themselves to the global communicative architecture that had been set up by the nineteenth century without handing their souls to the companies and governments that brought the world together. One such maverick was James Brooke, whose life was every bit as fantastic as the Borneo that he romanticised about.

Born in Secrore, in the suburbs of Benares (Varanasi), India, James Brooke was the son of Thomas Brooke, a functionary in the civil service of the East India Company. He entered the service of the East India Company in 1817, but was wounded in the First Anglo-Burmese War and forced to return to England.[6] By then England was celebrating its heroes and men like Raffles were the rising stars in the firmament. Wannabe-stars like Gregor MacGregor were also around, plying their trade by luring unwary speculators to join in their fraudulent endeavours to colonise lands that did not exist. For men like Brooke the time was right and in 1830 he returned to Asia. While on his way to China via Calcutta, he saw the coastline of Borneo for the first time. By then no longer in the service of the East India Company, Brooke was a free man and he saw in Borneo the opportunity to make his mark in the world. Entirely convinced of his own mission and destiny, he had modelled himself on another self-made merchant-explorer, Stamford Raffles. In his own words: 'I go, to awaken the spirit of slumbering philanthropy with regards to these islands; to carry Sir Stamford Raffles' views in Java over the whole Archipelago.'[7]

That James Brooke was enamoured by his idol Raffles is hardly a surprise as Runciman has noted, for he felt that the East India Company had treated Raffles badly and had failed to support Raffles' grand plan for the development of the colonies of Southeast Asia.[8] In his narrative (booked

5 Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, 97.

6 'The Late Rajah Sir James Brooke', 8.

7 Keppel, *Expedition to Borneo*, vol. 1, 4.

8 Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, 49. Runciman also notes that James Brooke believed that the East India Company was neglecting the development of India in favour of quicker profits from

for posterity by Henry Keppel) Brooke stated that: 'I may pass in silence my motives for undertaking so long and arduous a voyage [to Borneo]; and it would be sufficient to say, that I have been firmly convinced of its beneficial tendency in *adding to knowledge, increasing trade, and spreading Christianity*' (emphasis mine).[9] That Brooke wished to add to the Western world's *knowledge* of Borneo was reminiscent of the scholarly pretensions of Raffles whom he so admired. That he came to know Borneo as a *den of pirates* was the result of his own Eurocentric tilt that led him to the same confirmation bias was Raffles' as well.

Following his father's death and after receiving his inheritance, Brooke planned his voyage to the East on board the *Royalist*, which cast off in 1838. In his prospectus that was published in the *Athenaeum* on 13 October 1838 he outlined his aims and made it clear that he intended to accomplish what Raffles was not allowed to achieve: namely, the creation of a commercial base through territorial expansion, for no commercial enterprise in the East could succeed without territory under its control.[10] The notorious trickster Gregor MacGregor had fashioned himself as the 'Prince of Poyais' and had managed to dupe many a greedy investor to follow him in his search for the land of abundance and opportunity along the Mosquito Coast of Central America; but Brooke was destined to become a *king*, and to rule over a land that was solid enough to stand on.

Upon his arrival in Singapore, Brooke was presented with a chance to gain all that he sought: The governor of Singapore, Mr Bonham, requested that the *Royalist* set sail to Sarawak to convey the thanks of the British government to Rajah Muda Hassim, the official regent of the Sultan of Brunei posted there, for the assistance he had given to a company of British seamen whose ship had been stranded off the mouth of the Sarawak River. Brooke complied with this request, as it offered him the opportunity to survey a part of Borneo that he was unfamiliar with. His first impression

the China trade, and that he was shocked by the terms imposed on the Chinese by the company's merchants in the wake of the Anglo-Chinese Opium War.

9 Brooke, quoted in Keppel, *Expedition to Borneo*, vol. 1, 7.

10 Brooke's Prospectus seemed so impressive that the Dutch embassy in London sent a copy to the Hague to warn the Dutch authorities of Brooke's imminent arrival to the East Indies. But despite the bombast of his writing, Brooke's Prospectus was full of errors: His claim that North Borneo was a British possession was weak; his stated aim of going to Marudu Bay was impossible as it was home to the hostile Llanuns; and his stated ambition of discovering the great lake of Kinabalu was inaccurate because there was no lake there in the first place (Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, 53-54).

of Sarawak was that it was a virgin land that had never been explored and cultivated by man:

> Here I indeed behold nature fresh from the bosom of creation, unchanged by man, and stamped with the same impress she originally bore! Here I behold God's design when he formed this tropical land, and left its culture and improvement to the agency of man. *The Creator's gift, as yet neglected by the creature; and yet the time may be confidently looked for, when the axe shall level the forest, and the plough turn the ground.*[11] (Emphasis mine)

In his negotiations with the native rulers (Rajah Muda Hassim and the Pangeran Mahkota), Brooke went further than he was asked to by openly declaring that if the Borneans wished to keep the Dutch out of their territory, they should not accept any Dutch merchants in Sarawak at all.[12] From the outset, James Brooke's status and standing in the East Indies was ambiguous. He had arrived in the archipelago as a private merchant-adventurer, though his schooner the *Royalist* belonged to the Royal Yacht Squadron and was therefore accorded the status as a ship of the Royal Navy. He was despatched to Sarawak to convey the thanks of the governor of Singapore, but he unilaterally initiated negotiations with the local rulers and expressed hostile opinions about other European traders in the region. The loosest gun on the *Royalist*'s deck seemed to be the captain himself.

The line was crossed on 4 November 1840 when, during his second visit to Sarawak, Brooke was persuaded to stay by the rajah, Muda Hassim, whose forces were in peril of being overwhelmed by rebellious Dayaks. The Rajah Muda offered Brooke command over the territories of Siniawan and Sarawak, and gave him the right to bear the title of rajah as well. Yet from the outset of this enterprise, the terms and conditions of engagement were not clear: James Brooke was a private merchant who did not have the authority to represent the British crown or any other state. The Rajah Muda Hassim was likewise merely the heir-presumptive and regent of Brunei, and had no right to relinquish control over Siniawan and Sarawak to anyone, let alone offer Brooke the title of rajah. It seems extraordinary to note that the Brooke dynasty – that was destined to last three generations – took off from such shaky foundations that were laced with contingency and chance. But it is from such productive ambiguity that certainties are forged in retrospect.

11 Brooke, quoted in Keppel, *Expedition to Borneo*, vol. 1, 19-20.

12 Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, 62.

Having secured for himself the long sought-after toehold in Sarawak, James Brooke would spend the next few years consolidating his position by winning over the support of the local Malay and Dayak leaders and communities, and by chipping away at the remnants of Brunei's power – culminating in the final invasion of Brunei itself and the establishment of Labuan, which would preside over the eclipse of the older kingdom.

Upon his return to Sarawak Brooke presented the Rajah Muda Hassim gifts of silk and gunpowder to win him over.[13] Being a man of his time, Brooke – like the other functionaries of the East India Company who ventured to Asia then – was a believer in the theory of racial difference.[14] Like Raffles, who regarded the Javanese as being simple-minded and naïve, Brooke regarded the natives of Sarawak as 'wild' and 'in a low condition', but felt that 'theirs is an innocent state, and I consider them capable of being easily raised in the scale of society'.[15] The Chinese he regarded as 'corrupt, supple and exacting, yielding to their superiors and tyrannical to those who fall under their power'.[16] Brooke attempted his own crude pseudo-scientific study of the physique of the Dayaks of Sarawak, indulging in some amateur anthropometry and craniometry. When meeting the Sibnowan Dayaks he measured their height and even the circumference of the skull of the chief.[17] The Malays, on the other hand, were seen by him as often treacherous and cowardly, and 'Malay governments were so bad', that 'any attempt to govern without a change of these abuses would be impossible."[18] When he visited the Kingdom of Brunei he found it to be in a 'miserable state"[19] and of the Sultan of Brunei Brooke's opinion was that the man, though 'by no means cruel', was 'short and puffy

13 Keppel, *Expedition to Borneo*, vol. 1, 14-15.

14 On the way to the East Indies Brooke's ship *The Royalist* stopped at Rio, Brazil, and he penned his observations about the Africans who had been brought to Brazil as slaves: 'Anyone comparing the puny Portuguese or the bastard Brazilian with the athletic negro, cannot but allow that the ordinary changes and chances of time will place this fine country [Brazil] in the hands of the latter race. The negro will be fit to cultivate the soil, and will thrive beneath the tropical sun of the Brazils. The enfeebled white man will grow more enfeebled and degenerate with each succeeding generation, and languishes in a clime which nature never designed him to inhabit' (Brooke, quoted in Keppel, *Expedition to Borneo*, vol. 1, 9-10). Just how Brooke himself intended to survive in Borneo was a question he never posed to himself though.

15 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 1, 59.

16 Brooke, quoted in Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*, vol. 1, 9-10, 108-109. As Runciman has noted, 'Brooke was not attracted by the Chinese. They seemed to him ugly and ungainly, with complexions like corpses; but he wrote admiringly of their industry and their respect for education' (Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, 49-50).

17 Keppel, *Expedition to Borneo*, vol. 1, 52-55.

18 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 1, 211.

19 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 1, 332.

in person, with a countenance which expresses very obviously the imbecility of his mind… His mind, indexed by his face, seems to be a chaos of confusion; without acuteness, without dignity and without good sense.'[20]

Brooke had set out to *know* the natives of Borneo, and in the process *civilise* them, too; but in his private letters he would lament the fact that he had not received the support of the British government (though he failed to note that he acted without his government's approval or direction) and that he was never offered a knighthood for his services.[21] Nonetheless, he helped himself to the title of rajah and eventually declared Sarawak to be a sovereign kingdom under his rule.[22] Having abrogated himself the right to rule as king, he then assumed the right to judge the natives as well, more often than not as *pirates*.

As soon as he assumed power in Sarawak, Brooke set out to reform the system of native rule which he regarded as retrogressive. The first code of law that he issued in 1842 made it clear that his government would maintain a monopoly over key commodities and resources such as antimony and opium, and that henceforth those who refused to comply with the demands of the new rajah had better leave the kingdom instead. During the initial stages of his rule, James Brooke was keen to ensure that Sarawak would not be exploited by other Western companies – which earned him the ire and distrust of his fellow Englishmen in Singapore, and other Europeans. He wrote about the need to open up Sarawak and to encourage enterprise, in order to create the conditions of possibility where the native Borneans would be able to excel and to improve themselves:

> It is contended, and will always be contended, that the location of a just and liberal European people amidst uncivilised and demi-civilised races, is calculated to advance the best interests of those races by diffusion of knowledge, the impartial administration of justice, and the increase of commerce… But taking it in the most favourable point of view, granting that a government is all that it ought to be, let it be asked: have any people been so civilised, especially when the difference of colour a mark of

20 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 1, 328.

21 Brooke would also be knighted eventually, after the capture of Labuan and the defeat of Brunei. In 1848 he was made Knight Commander of the Bath.

22 James Brooke was formally proclaimed to be the rajah and governor of Sarawak by Rajah Muda Hassim on 24 November 1841. Brooke had brought the guns of his ship and his soldiers with him, and they surrounded the palace of Rajah Muda Hassim, thereby compelling him to have an audience with Brooke. During their meeting Brooke declared that he had the support of the Malays and Dayaks, and unless Rajah Muda invested him with the power to rule, he would seek the support of the Malays and Dayaks against the Pangeran Mahkota and Rajah Muda.

> inextinguishable distinction between the governing and the governed? Is it not necessary for states, as individuals, to form a distinctive character? The vassalage of the mass, like the dependence of a single mind, may form a yielding, pliant, even able character; but like wax it retains one impression only, to be succeeded by the next which is given. *The struggling of a nation, its dear-bought experiences, are absolutely necessary for the development of freedom.* Any other mode, is but reducing the bad state of a people to a worse, and whilst offering protection and food, depriving them of all stimulus which leads to the independence of communities. Has any European nation been civilised by such a process? I know of none. (Emphasis mine)[23]

Here lay the fundamental contradiction that was to bedevil Brooke's enterprise from the start. Cognisant of his own precarious legal-political position and yet confident in his own liberal intentions and moral superiority, Brooke did not relent in his claim that his was a civilising enterprise, driven by the highest of moral virtues. Yet in his attitude to the land that had now come under his rule, he betrayed a confusion that was profound: Brooke wanted to *preserve and protect Sarawak* from the predatory machinations of Western capital, and yet did so on the basis that Sarawak was now *his* kingdom to protect and guide as he saw fit.

As Brooke's stance was assailed on two fronts – by the British government that did not accept that a British subject could become a sovereign in a foreign land, and by native Sarawak leaders who regarded him as a vassal-turned-usurper – Brooke's narrative shifted from a liberal to a more confrontational tone. The 'pirate' becomes the bugbear that halts the march of progress in Brooke's Sarawak, and he takes to the seas and rivers to do battle with the Sadong and Skrang Dayaks who were, of course, the original inhabitants of the land he claimed to love himself. Ultimately, Brooke's campaign against piracy culminated in the attack on Brunei by a squadron of British vessels. By this stage, Brooke's own justification for his rule over Sarawak was less flowery:

> Such is the miserable state of things [in Borneo]; such is the wretched condition of a country where the choicest productions, mineral and vegetable, abound; so miserable, indeed, that I believe that in spite of my former prepossessions in favour of a Malay state, that any change must be for the better, and I do not believe that any change would be resisted by the people.[24]

23 Brooke, quoted in Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*, vol. 1, 66-67.

24 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 1, 190.

Brooke's earlier opinions about native rule in Sarawak are finally superseded by his political and economic concerns: The campaign against piracy ends with the defeat of Brunei and the annexation of the island of Labuan as part of the British Empire. Brooke was granted the right to rule Sarawak as its rajah, and mining rights throughout the kingdom by the Sultan of Brunei.

It is one of the supreme ironies of this story that James Brooke – a British citizen with no administrative or financial experience – was ultimately made king by the Sultan of Brunei, whom Brooke ultimately chastises as a *weak ruler* and a *protector of pirates*. In Brooke's complex and shifting relationship with the Sultan of Brunei and other Sarawak nobles such as Rajah Muda Hassim and Pengiran Mahkota, the signifier 'pirate' comes into play – as an identity-marker that draws the frontier between friend and foe, competitor and ally.

To the end of his life, James Brooke was not able to settle the dispute over his status as ruler of Sarawak.[25] As his fame grew, so did the notoriety of the man who was seen by some as the romantic White Rajah, carrying the White Man's burden to faraway lands in the East; and by others as the murderer of innocent natives. (The politician Joseph Hume referred to Brooke as the 'promoter of deeds of bloodshed and cruelty' (see Appendix C)). In Singapore, British merchants rallied against Brooke and turned to newspapers like the *Straits Times* to publicise their cause against the man who was seen as a stumbling block to British economic expansionism in the archipelago. Back in London, Brooke was attacked by newspapers like the *Spectator*, Tory politicians and organisations such as the Aborigines Protection Society and Peace Society, on the grounds that he did not have the right to unilaterally decide who was an enemy and who was not – particularly when his own status and standing was not so certain itself (Appendix C). When a commission was set up to enquire into the affairs of Sarawak, one of the primary tasks of the commission was to 'decide if he [Brooke] was or was not a suitable person to decide who were pirates, and whether in fact the victims of his attacks had been pirates'.[26] The findings of the commission were damaging to Brooke: It found that he had never been a trader in the true sense of the word; that it was wrong to entrust him with the power to determine who were pirates and who were not; and that he did not have the right to call upon the help of the Royal Navy.

25 It was only by the time of his death that James Brooke would achieve some degree of social respectability, but this was partly due to how his reputation had been served by his admirers. After his passing an obituary in the *London Illustrated News* described him as an 'enterprising English gentleman who became the ruler of a semi-independent principality of Malays and Dyaks in Borneo' ('The Late Rajah Sir James Brooke').

26 Brooke was, in the eyes of the commission, nothing more than a vassal of the Sultan of Brunei (Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, 107, 116-117).

Florid as his reputation was, James Brooke would suffer a fate similar to that of his own hero, Stamford Raffles, who was later accused of stepping beyond the law to serve his own interests.[27] Both men were accused of falsifying data and reports, of creating enemies among the native communities, and of using violence to achieve their ends. Brooke was by no means the only Englishman who had the idea of carving up a slice of Southeast Asia to make a kingdom for himself: Alexander Hare had tried to do the same at Banjarmasin, but he had failed miserably.[28] Even though Raffles' name would only be glorified after his death, Brooke did not have to wait that long. During his lifetime James Brooke would be celebrated by a number of other Englishmen such as Henry Keppel, Rodney Mundy, Frank Marryat and Spenser St John; and in their writings he would come to be lionised as Rajah Brooke, vanquisher of the pirates of Borneo.

6.c Enter the Pirate: The Native Pirate as the Constitutive Other to Western Colonialism

> The image of hatred and of the Other is neither the romantic victim of our clannish indolence nor the intruder responsible for all the ills of the polis… Strangely, the foreigner lives within us, he is the hidden face of our identity.[29]
>
> – Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991)

The trope of the Borneo pirate was a staple of popular juvenile fiction in the nineteenth century, inspiring novelists and artists alike.[30] But the pirate

27 Alatas' critical biography of Thomas Stamford Raffles highlights two of the most important scandals that blighted his career while he served in the East: The first regards the role that Raffles played in the massacre of the Dutch colony in Palembang. The other scandal was the Banjarmasin Affair, where Raffles' colleague Alexander Hare attempted to open a settlement along the east coast of Borneo, near the Kingdom of Banjarmasin (Alatas, *Thomas Stamford Raffles*).

28 Alexander Hare's proposed settlement at Banjarmasin was problematic from the beginning, but what became a greater cause of alarm was the revelation that the settlement was managed like a penal colony, where prisoners were forcibly pressed into work for the company. What made matters even worse was the fact that Hare was discovered to be guilty of kidnapping hundreds of women who were brought to the settlement to meet the needs of the men there as well. Alatas noted that 'it was Raffles' edict that had provided an outlet of kidnapping under the camouflage of law' (Alatas, *Thomas Stamford Raffles*, 38). The Banjarmasin project was eventually scraped, but the scandal damaged the reputation of both Alexander Hare and Stamford Raffles.

29 Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 1.

30 The popular writer G.A. Henty, for instance, would later write many stories about pirates and brigands in Southeast Asia, and such novels were popular up to the 1910s. See, for example, his *Among Malay Pirates: A Tale of Adventure and Peril* (1902) and *In the Hands of the Malays* (1905).

myth had a history that dated back to the first attempts by the British to impress their stamp across the archipelago – in 1775 the East India Company lost its settlement at Balambangan on the north coast of Borneo after it was attacked by forces from Sulu – and was originally the stuff of more serious studies and political reports. One of the first reports of the kind came from John Hunt, who penned 'A Sketch of Borneo, or Pulo Kalamantan' in 1812, a report that was intended for the East India Company's base at Batavia during the British occupation of Java.[31] Soedjatmoko has pointed out that at the time there were very few works of note on Borneo, and among them were John Leyden's *Sketch of Borneo* (1814), Crawfurd's *Indian Archipelago* (1820) and later J.H. Moor's *Notes on the Indian Archipelago* (1837).[32] Though Hunt's work has since been long forgotten, it is crucial to our argument here for in it we find one of the first accounts of the *degeneracy* of the native races of Borneo and the rise of the 'piratical races' of maritime Southeast Asia.

Just how Hunt set the stage for the emergence of the Southeast Asian pirate is of some interest, for there was some artistry in his work: Citing European sources such as Pigafetta and Magellan, he noted that the Kingdom of Borneo (or Bruni) was indeed a great maritime and commercial emporium in the past.[33] The Borneo of his time, however, was depicted by Hunt in terms that were terrifying: He divided the various ethnic groups of the island according to a hierarchy, sorting out the 'migrant settler races' from the 'aborigines', the latter of whom are described as being more brutal and savage compared to the former.[34] Hunt noted that the Malays of Borneo

31 Hunt, 'A Sketch of Borneo', xvi-lxiii.

32 Soedjatmoko, *An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography*, 265.

33 Hunt, 'A Sketch of Borneo', xvii. Hunt begins his account of Borneo by dividing his subject – literally – and notes that Borneo is not a singular kingdom but rather one of several that exist on the island of Kalimantan: 'The natives and the Malays, formerly, and even at this day, call this large island by the exclusive name of Pulo Kalamantan, from a sour and indigenous fruit so called. Borneo was the name only of a city, the capital of one of the three distinct kingdoms on the island. When Magalhaens [Magellan] visited it in the year 1520 he saw a rich and populous city, a luxuriant and fertile country, a powerful prince, and a magnificent court; hence the Spaniards hastily concluded that the whole island not only belonged to this prince, but that it was likewise named Borneo. In this error they have been followed by other European nations. The charts however mark this capital "Borneo Proper", or, in other words, the only place properly Borneo; this is the only confession of this misnomer I have met with among Europeans. The natives pronounce Borneo, Bruni, and say that it is derived from the word Brani, courageous; the aboriginal natives within this district having ever remained unconquered.'

34 Ibid., xviii. The Malays, he notes, are called *'Islams';* while around Pontianak and Sambas there are the *Dayers* (Dayaks); at Banjarmasin, the *Biajus* (Bajaus), at Borneo Proper, the *Muruts;* and to the north, the *Orang Idan* (Ibans). The *Muruts* and *Orang Idan* are, on Hunt's account, 'much fairer and better featured than the Malays, and of a more strong and robust frame'. The

regarded the Dayaks as 'the most savage and ferocious of men', and in his own description of them seems to concur with this view.[35] When accounting for the practice of piracy in Borneo, Hunt rallied history to his cause and opined that the degeneration of the native port cities of Borneo was due to the decline of commerce, which was the reason why the people of Borneo had turned to piracy instead:

> The ports of Borneo have not dwindled away more than Acheen [Aceh], Johore, Malacca, Bantam, Ternate, etc. All these places likewise cut a splendid figure in the eyes of our first navigators, but have since equally shared a proportionate obscurity. Were the causes required which have eclipsed the prosperity of Borneo and the other great emporiums of Eastern trade that once existed, it might be readily answered – the decay of commerce. They have suffered the same vicissitudes of Tyre, Sidon and Alexandria; and like Carthage – for ages the emporium of the wealth and commerce of the world, which now exhibits on its site a piratical race of descendants in the modern Tunisians and their neighbours the Algerines – *the commercial ports of Borneo have become a nest of banditti, and the original inhabitants of both, from similar causes – the decay of commerce – have degenerated to the modern pirates of the present day.* (Emphasis mine)[36]

Though it might have been flattering for the natives of Borneo to know that in Hunt's narrative they were compared to the Alexandrians and Carthaginians of old, it was also less flattering for them to be compared to the pirates of Tunisia and Algeria of present times. With a sweep of his pen Hunt had

Dayaks, on the other hand, are according to Hunt 'much darker, and approaches nearer in resemblance to the Malays'.

35 Ibid., xviii-xix. Of the native ethnic groups of Borneo, Hunt has this to say: 'They live in miserable small huts; their sole dress consisting of a slight wrapper around their waists, sometimes made of bark, at others from skins of animals, or perhaps blue or white cloth; they eat rice or roots, or indeed any description of food, whether beast, reptile or vermin: they are extremely filthy; this and bad food give them a cutaneous disorder, which they are generally afflicted. Several tribes of them smear themselves with oil or pigments, which gives them the appearance of being tattooed… They are said to shoot poisoned balls or arrows through hollow tubes; and whenever they kill a man, they preserve the skull to exhibit as a trophy to commemorate the achievement of their arms. They are said to have no mode of communicating their ideas by characters or writing, like the Battas [Bataks]. Driven from the seacoast of Borneo into the mountains and fastness of the interior, they are more occupied in the chase and the pursuits of husbandry than in commerce… The Malays present them as the most savage and ferocious of men; but to be more savage or ferocious than a Malay is a thing utterly impossible.'

36 Hunt, quoted in Keppel, *Expedition to Borneo*, xxi.

effectively relegated Borneo (along with every other native commercial power) to the past as a relic of antiquity, whose descendants had degenerated to the level of bandits and pirates. Piracy was thus pathologised: *It was both a consequence and symptom of degeneration.*

And as the outdated natives could not possibly keep up with the march of progress – the tools of which they neither possessed nor controlled – their derelict state was to be their lot in perpetuity. What was required, for Hunt as well as others of his generation like Raffles and Brooke, was the *arrest* of this decay through the revitalisation of commerce that would come through new blood, and a new generation of privateer-entrepreneurs. *It was thus that the coloniser and the pirate were born together, like conjoined twins, in the dialectical logic of modern colonial-capitalism.*

6.d The 'Pirate Menace' Realised: The Instrumentalisation of the Borneo Pirate in the Writings of Keppel, Mundy and Marryat

> As soon as one perceives a monster in a monster, one begins to domesticate it; one begins – to compare it to the norms, to analyse it, and consequently to master what could be terrifying in this figure of the monster. However monstrous events or texts may be, from the moment they enter into culture the movement of acculturation, of domestication, of normalisation has already begun.[37]
>
> – Jacques Derrida, *Passages: From Traumatism to Promise* (1995)

That the Borneo pirate would feature so prominently in the life of James Brooke, and be taken up in the writings of Keppel, Mundy and Marryat later, is not surprising considering how widespread the notion of the 'pirate menace' had grown by the nineteenth century. In the same way that the contemporary phenomenon of religio-political terrorism has spawned a security industry today, with its own language-game of anti-terrorism, the phenomenon of armed Asiatic mariners occasioned the fear of native pirates and a discourse of anti-piracy then. The language-game of the anti-piracy war was shared by practically all the Western nations at the time, as they expanded their trading networks across Asia and sought to dominate and police the waters off China and Southeast Asia. 'Pirates' popped up everywhere: in treaties, contracts, news reports and popular fiction.

37 Derrida and Weber, *Passages*, 386.

The Southeast Asian pirate became the stuff of legend, and the figure of the sword-wielding native cutthroat soon became a common trope in the literature and reports that were produced by the British, Dutch, Spanish and Americans as they extended their influence across the archipelago. The Americans were among the last Westerners to venture to Southeast Asia but in 1831 an attack on the American ship *Friendship* off the coast of North Sumatra led to the United States' first gunboat action at Kuala Batee in 1832[38] and America then joined in the campaign to rid the waters of Asia of pirates of all kinds. When President John Tyler concluded America's Treaty of Wanghia with China in 1845, the twenty-sixth article of the treaty explicitly mentioned piracy as a concern, and America's intention of policing the East China Sea to protect American commercial shipping.[39]

38 In 1832 the American frigate *USS Potomac* attacked the settlement of Kuala Batee in North Sumatra as an act of reprisal for the attack on the American commercial vessel *Friendship* the year earlier. Though the attack was successful, the American media was divided over the action as there later emerged allegations of questionable conduct among the American troops involved. The expedition was commanded by Commodore John Downes, and though he was praised for his handling of the mission by the government upon his return he was never allowed to command another foreign expedition. The First Sumatran Expedition did not, however, solve the problem of attacks on American shipping, and in 1838 a second expedition was sent out which led to the bombardment of the coastal settlement of Muckie. See Noor, 'America in Southeast Asia before the "Pivot"'; Reynolds, *Voyage of the United States Frigate* Potomac; Taylor, *The Flag Ship;* and Warriner, *Cruise of the United States Frigate* Potomac. The Kuala Batee attack was reported in several American newspapers at the time (see, for example, 'Kuala Battee – War with the Malays', 'Com. Downes and the Frigate Potomac', and 'The Affair of Quallah Battoo').

39 The tenth president of the United States, John Tyler (1841-1845) – who annexed the Republic of Texas in 1845 to expand the union in keeping with his belief in America's 'manifest destiny' – was also the president who concluded a treaty with China in 1845. Tyler argued that it would 'place our relations with China on a new footing, eminently favourable to the commerce and other interests of the United States' (Tyler, 'Message from the President of the United States', section 58, p. 1). Article 26 stipulated that the treaty 'provides for the police and security of merchant vessels of the United States in the waters of China, and the pursuit and punishment of piracies on the same by subjects of China' (p. 3). Tyler had asked Congress to approve his suggestion that a permanent minister or commissioner be appointed and sent to China, 'as in the case of certain Mohammedan states' that America already had dealings with (p. 1). Not all the members of the Senate were persuaded by President Tyler's overtures to China, however. C. Cushing, in his reply to Secretary of State John Calhoun, argued that 'the United States ought not to concede to any foreign state, under any circumstances, jurisdiction over the life and liberty of any citizen of the United States, unless that foreign state be of our own family of nations; in a word, a Christian state' (p. 12). Cushing and other American politicians like him then believed in a neat distinction between Christian nations and other 'semi-barbarous' states 'where no Christian feels safe in subjection to the local authorities' (p. 7), and he felt that America's treaty with China was flawed for it placed China on equal terms with the United States; a notion that Cushing rejected on the grounds that 'international law' was the outcome of relations among

By the 1830s the Western powers were growing increasingly assertive in their response to the so-called 'pirate menace' in Southeast Asia. Borneo had been singled out as a danger zone where Western ships and Western lives were constantly at risk, but Brunei was still a sovereign kingdom and the northern coast of Borneo had yet to come under the sway of the British East India Company or any other rival Western power. Unlike Java and Sumatra, few Western scholars had ventured there and little was known about the place – making James Brooke the pioneer by default.

Brooke never managed to publish an extensive account of his experience in Borneo, but like Raffles he would later be valorised by his fellow countrymen – who were of a less maverick disposition. Brooke's praises were sung not by the company men of the East India Company (for many among the merchants based in Penang and Singapore were resentful of his attempt to hoard all of the northern coast of Borneo for himself), but by military men who worked with him in his campaign to subdue Borneo and defeat Brunei. The allure of James Brooke for military men like Keppel, Mundy and Marryat may have been that he was a free man, and a free agent. Unlike the men in uniform – whose thoughts and actions were likewise uniform in praxis, like mechanised units – Brooke was at liberty to do whatever he wanted.

The three authors whose works are being considered here were all of military-naval pedigree: Admiral Sir Henry Keppel (1809-1904) had served in the British navy since his youth: Having graduated from the Royal Naval Academy he was promoted to Lieutenant in 1829. In 1831 he did his first tour of the East Indies on the *HMS Magicienne* (a ship that had been captured from the French in 1781), and in 1837 he was made commander of the *HMS Dido*. He took part in both the First and Second Opium Wars against China, and during the Crimean War he was posted to the Black Sea. In 1867 he was made admiral and commander of operations in China, and by the time he retired he was a well-known figure in London, earning him the honour of being rendered by the artist James Tissot for *Vanity Fair*. Keppel documented all his campaigns, but he is famous for his work *The Expedition to Borneo of the* HMS Dido *for the Suppression of Piracy* that was published – in two volumes – in 1846.

Sir George Rodney Mundy (1805-1884) was also a Navy man down to his breeches: During the Belgian Revolution he mediated between the Dutch and the Belgians, and he managed to persuade the former to give up Antwerp. Raised to the rank of captain, he was despatched to the East Indies

European states, which meant that international law was fundamentally Christian in character and applied only to Christian states (pp. 7, 8-9).

and it was there (under the overall command of Admiral Thomas Cochrane) that he played a role in the defeat of Brunei and the seizure of Labuan in 1846. Though he would later assume the post of second-in-command of the British fleet in the Mediterranean and convey Garibaldi and his thousand men to take Sicily in 1860, the account of his role as commander of the *HMS Iris* and the defeat of Brunei entitled *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes, Down to the Occupation of Labuan* – published in 1848 and in two volumes, like Keppel's narrative – was his most enduring work.[40]

Frank Marryat (1826-1855) was the third naval serviceman who played a part in the vaulting of Brooke's legend: The son of the famous naval officer and novelist Captain Frederick Marryat (who was an acquaintance of Charles Dickens no less), he was on board the *HMS Samarang* that was patrolling off the coast of Sarawak in the 1840s. He was an accomplished illustrator, too. His illustrations were later supplemented by his own notes of his stay in Sarawak and published in 1848 under the title *Borneo and the Indian Archipelago*.[41]

The three works by these three men – Keppel's *Expedition to Borneo for the Suppression of Piracy* (1846), Mundy's *Narrative of Events in Borneo* (1848) and Marryat's *Borneo and the Indian Archipelago* (1848) – would eventually secure Brooke's fate and reputation and elevate him higher than he had ever hoped for.

The modern reader who examines these works would be struck by the confirmation bias that was at work in the language-game of nineteenth-century colonial-capitalism. All three authors were in fundamental agreement with Brooke and all three had concluded that piracy was indeed a dire problem in Southeast Asian waters, that Borneo was in fact a nest of pirates and that the main culprit for this was the Kingdom of Brunei, which was cast in a negative light as the 'protector' of pirates and piracy (somewhat akin to the present-day notion of 'rogue states' that are cast as the 'protectors' of terrorists and terrorism). Even though their narratives lent the impression of being adventure stories of the *Boys' Own* genre, their accounts of Borneo were appreciated by the general reading public as well as statesmen and policy-makers: The Scottish Whig Parliamentarian Robert Bruce Macleod had a personal copy of Keppel's *Expedition to Borneo*[42] and so widely read was Mundy's work that even the Earl of Derby – Edward George Smith-Stanley – and future prime minister of England, had a copy

40 Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*.

41 *Marryat, Borneo and the Indian Archipelago*.

42 See Keppel, *The Expedition to Borneo*.

in his personal library.[43] The trope of the Borneo pirate was an instrumental fiction that played a part in the geostrategic calculations that took place in the corridors of power.

That Keppel, Mundy and Marryat endorsed Brooke's unilateral declaration of 'war against piracy' is hardly surprising considering their own subject-positions as military personnel and their interest in serving the British Empire. They had, after all, been directed to police and pacify the waters of Southeast Asia in order to secure safe trade routes for British merchant shipping, and in performing their duty they served both the Crown of England and the commercial interests of the East India Company simultaneously. Keppel, Mundy and Marryat were not passive spectators to the glory of Brooke, but active players who contributed to the latter's success as well as the gains made in the name of their country. The anti-piracy campaign culminated in the defeat of Brunei and the seizure of Labuan island on 24 December 1846, and Captain Mundy was the one who hoisted the British flag on Labuan for the first time, signifying its entry into the British Empire.

6.e.i Brooke Vindicated in Keppel's *Expedition to Borneo*

> From the experience even of 'a little war' an enlightened observer may deduce the most sound data on which to commence a mighty change.[44]
> – Captain Henry Keppel, *The Expedition to Borneo of the* HMS Dido (1846)

Captain Henry Keppel, in his introduction to *The Expedition to Borneo*, dedicated his work to his father, the Earl of Albermarle, while noting that he was entrusted by James Brooke with the narrative of the latter, and that he wished that Brooke's 'extraordinary career in that part of the world' to be made known to his fellow Englishmen.[45]

Though the *Expedition to Borneo* was published under Keppel's name, Keppel offers Brooke the right of way and practically the entirety of the first volume consists of extracts from Brooke's own journal. The meeting between the two men was a hazard of the naval service: Keppel notes that following the end of the war in China the *HMS Dido* was ordered to the

43 See Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*.
44 Keppel, *The Expedition to Borneo*, vol. 1, 192-193.
45 Ibid., vol. 1, v.

Malacca Straits 'for the protection of trade, and the suppression of piracy'.[46] Keppel's admiration for Brooke was unrestrained, for he noted that it was Brooke who had opened up Borneo to Westerners, at a time when even the maps of the British Admiralty office were hopelessly inaccurate in their depiction of the island.[47]

Keppel's work is a mixture of two interrelated stories: His own account of the manoeuvres and actions engaged by the *HMS Dido* while off the waters of Sarawak, and Brooke's account of Borneo and its people, culture, economy and, of course, the state of piracy there. It is important to note that Keppel makes no claims to knowledge of Borneo whatsoever, but rather allows Brooke to fill the epistemic gap. Brooke's own claims to knowledge were in turn entirely based on his observations, tinged with whatever hints of prejudice that may have jaundiced his view of the Malays and Dayaks of Borneo. Between the two narratives, a concert of opinions emerges, and Keppel's account of the attacks carried out by the *HMS Dido* are justified in the light of Brooke's judgement of the natives who are deemed piratical. On the subject of native kingdoms and their politics in Borneo, Brooke was convinced that the Malay states were universally weak, corrupt and silently accommodating of piracy, for as he argued: 'The old established Malay governments (such as Borneo and Sooloo), weak and distracted, are probably without exception, participators in, or victims of, piracy; and in many cases both – purchasing from one set of pirates, and enslaved and plundered by another.'[48]

Admitting no other role save that of naval commander and lately pirate-killer, Keppel leaves it to Brooke to elaborate further upon the nature of piracy around the waters of Borneo; and when he does Brooke repeats the same compartmentalising mindset that was at work when he differentiated between the native inland tribes of Borneo. Brooke does not simply describe the pirates of Borneo, but orders them according to ethnic-racial categories, saving his most damning invectives for the half-Arabs among them:

> The pirates on the coast of Borneo may be classed into those who make long voyages in large heavy-armed prahus, such as the Ilanuns, Balagnini, etc. and the lighter Dayak fleets, which make short but destructive

46 Ibid., vol. 1, 1.

47 Keppel noted that the maps of Borneo that he had been given were entirely wrong, and that 'I actually sailed by the best Admiralty chart eighty miles inland, and over the tops of mountains!' (ibid., vol. 2, 2).

48 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 2, 144.

> excursions in swift prahus... A third, and probably the worst class, are usually half-bred Arab Seriffs, who, possessing themselves of the territory of some Malay state, form a nucleus for piracy, a rendezvous and market for all the roving fleets.[49]

The pairing of the two narratives – Keppel's and Brooke's – in the *Expedition to Borneo* allows Keppel to recount the voyage of the *HMS Dido* without having to account for *why* Britain was waging war against the natives of Borneo. On the question of the righteousness of his actions, Keppel remained silent, but allowed Brooke to take on the thorny issue of *defining* piracy and justifying why it had to be so violently suppressed (see Appendix D). Brooke acknowledged that the war against piracy was problematic at heart, for 'A question may arise as to what constitutes piracy; and whether, in our efforts to suppress it, we may not be interfering with the right of native states.'[50] But this question is speedily brushed aside on the grounds that 'if we limit our construction of piracy, we shall, in most cases, be in want of sufficient evidence to convict; and the whole native trade of the archipelago will be left at the mercy of the pirates, much to the injury of our own commerce and our settlement in Singapore'.[51]

Thus in the end the economic argument prevailed over fuzzy intellectualism, and the war against piracy was waged so 'that our commerce will be largely extended'[52] from Singapore across the entire Southeast Asian archipelago. Brooke opined that British power should be allowed free rein across the region, and that 'if Labuan [Island] were English, and if the sea were clear of pirates' there would be nothing to stop British economic and military power from consolidating in the archipelago and halting the advance of other European companies and navies, too.[53] Despite the fact that he was not entirely loved by the European business community back in Singapore and Penang, Brooke's suggestion that British power should prevail over Brunei and that Labuan should be wrestled from her and made a permanent British colony was warmly received by British officials and military men such as John Crawfurd, who had served as governor-resident of Singapore.[54]

49 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 2, 144-145.

50 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 2, 153.

51 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 2, 153.

52 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 2, 155.

53 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 2, 159.

54 John Crawfurd, who had also taken part in Raffles' invasion of Java in 1811-1816, was later made Governor-Resident of Singapore and he continued to support British expansionism across

Though Brooke had admitted (in the quotation above) that piracy was a *discursive construct*, neither he nor Keppel endeavoured to deconstruct the idea itself or to interrogate its ideological-economic moorings. Throughout the work Keppel seems content to allow Brooke to have his say, and not once does he intervene in the latter's narrative, despite the contradictions that may strike the reader as obvious: Brooke, for instance, believed that his actions were justified in the defence of free trade – or rather to free the waters and rivers of Borneo for trade – but he did not hesitate to impose his own monopoly on the trade in antimony.[55]

Though Keppel tries to buttress the image of Brooke as the man responsible for the suppression of piracy in Sarawak, Brooke's own narrative – liberally inserted in Keppel's work – suggested that the talk of the 'pirate menace' around the waters of Borneo were somewhat exaggerated: Rajah Muda Hassim tried to assure Brooke that there was no real war in Sarawak and that the threat of piracy had been blown out of proportion.[56] And Brooke's own account of his first battle was a model of dullness in slow motion, where his 'grand army was lazy, and did not take the field', and the fighting came to an end as soon as the sun had set – the adversaries on both sides no longer inclined to shoot at one another but instead shouting and 'hallooing till midnight'.[57] At various points in his narrative Brooke lamented the 'treachery' and 'cowardice' of the Malays and Dayaks,[58] but though his narrative gave only his side of the story it seemed clear that it was Brooke who was more enthusiastic about waging a war in the upriver regions of Sarawak than the Dayaks and Malays themselves.

the Malay archipelago long after. In his report on Labuan, he supported the call to have the island taken from Brunei and turned into another British colony, like Singapore. Crawfurd argued that 'the position of Labuan will render it most convenient for the suppressing of piracy' (Crawfurd, quoted in Keppel, *The Expedition to Borneo*, vol. 2, 217) and that possession of Labuan as a colony would give Britain a superior tactical advantage over the native kingdoms of Brunei and Sulu, as well as being able to check the advance of Dutch power across the region. Crawfurd also believed that Labuan should be given the status of a free port, to attract foreign vessels, and that large numbers of Chinese migrants from China ought to be allowed to settle there, as they were allowed to do so in Singapore (p. 223). See also pp. 212-226.

55 Brooke's first codified law for Sarawak, which he had translated into Malay in Singapore, stated in Article 4: 'Trade, in all its branches, will be free, with the exception of antimony-ore, which the governor holds in his own hands' (quoted in Keppel, *The Expedition to Borneo*, vol. 1, 268).

56 Keppel, *The Expedition to Borneo*, vol. 1, 29.

57 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 1, 157, 158-159.

58 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 1, 171, 172, 173-175, 180, 183, 215, 216-217.

Much of Keppel's work was laced with a tinge of ambiguity, and there are moments in his own account of the expedition where it is not clear whether the war on piracy was truly about suppressing criminality: Keppel noted that after the punitive raids that were conducted by the *Dido* and the small army led by Brooke the native forces allied to Brooke's cause were allowed to load their boats with *plunder* – 'which in India they called *loot*'.[59] Just where the line between piracy and plunder lay was about as hazy as the Admiralty maps that Keppel had complained about earlier (see Appendix D).

The *Expedition to Borneo* sails along as Keppel describes the numerous attacks upon the native communities at Rembas, Pakoo, Patusan, etc. and culminates in the fateful attack on Brunei and the claiming of Labuan by the British. The martial tenor of Keppel the navy man is seen when he records these triumphs with an air of obvious satisfaction. After the settlement of Rembas was put to the torch, he declared that: 'After we had destroyed everything, we received a flag of truce; and here ended, for the present, the warlike part of our expedition. The punishment we had inflicted was severe, but no more than the crime of their horrid piracies deserved.'[60]

That Keppel-Brooke's war against the communities of Borneo was a case of asymmetrical warfare where one side's cannons and muskets were pit against the blowpipes and spears of the other was clearly evident, but in Keppel's narrative this imbalance was less the cause for moral introspection than a reason to gloat about the power of spectacular violence on weaker societies, for 'the destruction of these places astonished the whole country beyond description'.[61]

Visually descriptive though intellectually unreflective, Keppel's *Expedition of Borneo* was a work that was many things at the same time: A hagiographical account of James Brooke, a defence of British colonial-capitalism, and an appeal for greater military-economic expansion all in one. That Keppel was endeared to Brooke was evident in the text, for the two minds thought alike. Keppel's narrative, like the expedition of the *HMS Dido*, had to come to an end, and in his conclusion Keppel reiterates the view propagated by Brooke that Borneo must come under British rule to end the threat of piracy once and for all:

59 Keppel, *The Expedition to Borneo*, vol. 2, 69.
60 Ibid., vol. 2, 67.
61 Ibid., vol. 2, 67.

> Without a continued and determined series of operations of this sort, it is my conviction that even the most sanguinary and fatal onslaughts will achieve nothing beyond a present and temporary good. The impression on the native mind is not sufficiently lasting. Their old impulses and habits return with fresh force; they forget their heavy retribution. Till piracy be completely suppressed, there must be no relaxation: and well worth the perseverance is the end in view, the welfare of one of the richest and most improvable portions of the globe, and the incalculable extension of the blessings of Britain's prosperous commerce and humanising dominion.[62]

Keppel never did get down to answering the question of *what* exactly piracy was, and *who* was a pirate; but he understood that the war on piracy was in Britain's economic and military interests, and those were calculable. Having set aside the problem of meaning, the captain of the *HMS Dido* did not discombobulate.

6.e.ii The Pirate King Deposed: Mundy's Take on Brooke's War on Piracy

> And it is, it is a glorious thing,
> To be a Pirate King!
> – The King, in W. Gilbert and A. Sullivan, *The Pirates of Penzance; or The Slave of Duty* (1879)

> The existence of the disabled native is required for the next lie and the next and the next…
> – Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994)

Henry Keppel dedicated his book to the Earl of Albermarle, while Rodney Mundy dedicated his to the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Earl of Auckland.[63] In his introduction, Mundy noted that much had already been written about James Brooke's war on piracy by Keppel, but that he wished to highlight other aspects of Brooke's rule in Borneo that had gone unmentioned. Like Keppel, Mundy also allowed Brooke's voice to dominate his text, and it is Brooke's journal that really speaks in the *Narrative of Events in Borneo*.[64] Needless to say, Brooke comes across as

62 Ibid., vol. 2, 231.
63 Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*, vol. 1, i.
64 Ibid., vol. 1, iii-vii.

being whiter than white and nobler than the noblest of men in Mundy's narrative. From the outset Mundy portrays him as a man of high purpose and patrician virtue: 'A noble pilgrimage this! Prompted, not by the feelings of over-heated zeal, but by one of the best impulses of the human mind, the desire to relieve and disenchain millions of our oppressed and enslaved fellow-beings, our dark and semi-barbarous brethren of the Eastern Archipelago!'[65]

What is interesting about Mundy's work is that it features lengthy excerpts from Brooke's journal where the latter makes interesting comparisons between the present realities of the Southeast Asian archipelago and Europe of the past. On the subject of native rule in Celebes – which he visited when he first scouted the region – Brooke noted that:

> It will strike us that the government, or constitution, of Wajo, though ruled by feudal and arbitrary Rajahs, though cumbersome and slow in its movement, and defective in the administration of equal justice between man and man, yet possesses many claims to our own administration, and bears a striking resemblance to the government of feudal times in Europe, or rather that period in the Low Countries where the rights of free citizens were first acknowledged… It is a matter of still greater regret, that in that progressive and imperceptible march of movement, that growing importance which marks the prosperity of young states, they are altogether wanting or retrograding.[66]

Telling still was Brooke's view that European colonisation had *not* brought about progress in many parts of Southeast Asia, but had led to stagnation and the downfall of many native polities instead. Arguing that 'the same spirit which combines the atrocity of the Spaniard and the meanness of the Jew pedlar'[67] had animated European involvement thus far, Brooke argued for a benevolent form of intervention that would restore the prosperity of the native states, while keeping them under the guidance of Western power instead.

Though Brooke admired some of the native communities of Southeast Asia, such as the Bugis of Celebes (Sulawesi) whose 'enterprise as colonists and traders is a sufficient proof of their good qualifications',[68] he was

65 Ibid., vol. 1, 2-3.
66 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 1, 64-65.
67 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 1, 71.
68 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 1, 89.

less charitable when it came to the Malays and Dayaks of Borneo: Of the Kingdom of Brunei itself, Brooke described it as a 'spectacle of a government without a real head', owing to the struggle that was then taking place between the different contenders to the throne – Omar Ali Saffedin and Rajah Api.[69] Brunei's prosperity had declined as a result of Singapore's growing popularity among merchants,[70] and Brooke firmly believed by then that any change 'would not be resisted by the great mass of the people'.[71] The stage was thus set for Brooke's own form of 'benevolent intervention' that would culminate in the defeat of Brunei and the gaining of Labuan by the British Empire – his lengthy disquisition being, in fact, the prelude to war.

The upshot of Brooke's argument – reproduced in full by Mundy – was that the entire northern half of Borneo was in a state of crisis due to the political and economic weakness of Brunei that was undergoing a struggle for leadership. This crisis was, in turn, the reason why Borneo had become the den of pirates it was reputed to be, an argument that dates back to the first report by Hunt in 1812, and which was being reactivated all over again. By depicting Brunei the way he did, Brooke had found the justification he needed for his own intervention in its affairs and his eventual wrestling of Sarawak; though he failed to note that Brunei's relative decline as a trading power was also due to the growing assertiveness of the European companies in the region, and the fact that they had set up rival centres of commerce such as Singapore, Penang and Batavia that were slowly but surely luring away commercial traffic from the native port cities of the archipelago. Brooke chose not to connect the dots, and by doing so his own narrative – despite its blind-spots – manages to create the instrumental fiction of the disabled native Other whose rescue could only come through the benign intervention of outside forces. That intervention would indeed come, but in terms less tender than hoped for, and in the form of gunboats and marines instead.

Brooke's narrative – which takes up almost all of volume one of Mundy's work, clears the way for Mundy's own debut as the naval officer who leads the expedition against Brunei in volume two.[72]

In the lead-up to the invasion of Brunei, a consensus was slowly developed as to the righteousness of the act and the moral outcome to be expected

69 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 1, 183-184.

70 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 1, 188.

71 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 1, 190.

72 In Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*, the 'narrative' proper only begins on page 96 of the second volume of the work, and runs to page 395, running a total of 299 pages.

of it. Brooke's journal serves as the prelude to Mundy's own, as he quotes Brooke's argument that those states and kingdoms that protect pirates and allow piracy to continue should be punished as harshly 'as the thief himself'.[73] 'Sufficient force' was necessary, Brooke argued, to 'chastise the pirates' and 'by beneficial influence… correct the present wretched state of anarchy'.[74] To that end, a military victory over Brunei was required, as well as the capture of Labuan, for 'by the occupation of this island, the English influence over the government of Borneo would be complete'.[75]

It was thus that a British fleet 'of high privilege and distinctive character' was despatched to Brunei under the command of Rear Admiral Sir Thomas Cochrane, with Mundy as one of the senior officers taking part in the attack.[76] Unlike the invasion of Java in 1811 – which was a massive military operation that employed the use of combined arms of the East India Company and the British navy – the attack on Brunei was perhaps one of the first gunboat actions of great political import in Southeast Asia, destined to alter the history of that part of the archipelago for good. It was sparked by the killing of Pangeran Budrudeen and Rajah Muda Hassim – both allies of Brooke – by members of the 'piratical party' close to the throne in Brunei.[77] In reprisal Brunei was attacked on 8 July 1846 by a British force of steam-powered ironsides and gunboats armed with rockets that breached the city's defences with thunderclap surprise.[78] Out-gunned and out-manoeuvred, Brunei fell on the same day, and as Mundy wryly noted, 'the city, which having flourished five hundred years under Mohammedan rule, now fell before the arms of a Christian power'.[79]

By this stage of Mundy's narrative a neat dialectic between the British and the 'dark and semi-barbarous' natives had been reached: The passing of Rajah Muda Hassim and Pangeran Budrudeen effectively meant that there were no longer local personalities deemed worthy of any regard, and of the sultan and the rest of his court Mundy was entirely dismissive, judging them 'impostors', 'cowards' and 'treacherous' to the man.[80] Equally significant was the fact that by then Mundy's use of the signifier 'piracy' was sedimented and fixed. By the time the crestfallen Sultan of Brunei was forced to sign

73 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 2, 13.
74 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 2, 22.
75 Brooke, quoted in ibid., vol. 2, 25.
76 Ibid., vol. 2, 94.
77 Ibid., vol. 2, 142.
78 Ibid., vol. 2, 145-152.
79 Ibid., vol. 2, 152.
80 Ibid., vol. 2, 161, 169, 171, 174, 266.

the Treaty of Labuan on 18 December 1846 – which handed over Labuan to the Crown of England – the natives of Borneo had come to accept the British definition of piracy, and were obliged to play along. The third article of the treaty stated that 'The government of her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland hereby engages, in consideration of the cession above specified, to use its best endeavours to suppress piracy, and to protect lawful commerce, and the Sultan of Borneo, and his ministers, promise to afford every assistance to the British authorities.'[81]

Mundy himself would raise the Union Jack over Labuan, which signalled the defeat of Brunei and the ascendancy of Britain over the northern half of Borneo.[82] Admiral Cochrane was the one who appointed Pangeran Moormein as the new prime minister to the Sultan of Brunei. Henceforth Brunei would be obligated to Britain and in no position to resist the demand that Brunei play its part in the war against piracy, which the Sultan of Brunei consented to soon after.[83] Britain's victory was not merely a military

81 Ibid., vol. 2, 296.

82 At the base of the flagstaff was laid a granite slab with the inscription: 'This island was taken possession of on December 24 1846 in the name of her Majesty Victoria Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, under the direction of his Excellency Rear Admiral Sir Thomas Cochrane, Commander-in-Chief, by Captain G.R. Mundy, Commanding *HMS Iris*' (ibid., vol. 2, 305).

83 Following Brunei's defeat and the signing of the treaty with Britain, the Sultan of Brunei was compelled to lend his weight to the war on piracy. The 2 October 1847 edition of the *London Illustrated News* reported that James Brooke had defeated another band of pirates off the coast of Labuan, and soon after it was the Sultan of Brunei who ordered the execution of those deemed guilty of piracy. The report read thus: 'We may reckon the number killed at 80 or 100 men, and the wounded double the number. The loss on the British side was one man killed, and seven men wounded – two mortally and most severely. Ten brass guns, varying in size from nine-pounders to Lelas, and five iron guns were captured. Five prahus were taken, and the escape of the rest is to be attributed to the small number of our boats… The Sultan of Borneo [Brunei], who secured the persons of the pirates, appointed the 4th of June for their slaughter. They were taken to the rear of Bruni [Brunei] town, and the whole of the re-captured captives, thirty in number, were assembled at the spot. The day was made a general holiday; hundreds of Dyaks [Dayaks] were drawn to the spot. The Sultan directed the whole of the pirates to be secured, with their hands fastened behind their backs, their feet also bound, and a thick cord secured the knees to the neck – in this state they were utterly helpless. The Sultan then addressed the late captives, and, after expressing his dislike of piracy and slavery, requested the captives to take their revenge by slaying the pirates. The captives declined cutting their enemies to pieces. The Sultan addressed himself to Pangeran Moormein, the prime minister selected by Admiral Cochrane, and it was agreed that the Sultan and the Minister would destroy the pirates between them. The Sultan set the example. One of the pirates was secured to a tree, and the Sultan hurled at him a spear, which pierced the heart. This was the signal for the work of carnage. The followers of the Sultan and the Pangeran gave a shout of triumph, rushed on the pirates, and with parangs, spears and short swords cut the helpless wretches to pieces. Such was the summary execution of our new ally, the Sultan of Borneo' (['James Brooke Defeats Pirates off the Coast of Labuan'], 210-211).

one, but also epistemic. The defeat of Brunei closes the logical argument that began at the beginning of Mundy's work, where North Borneo was seen and cast as the lair of pirates and its ruler and his court the complicit beneficiaries of piracy. As a result of its defeat and subsequent submission to British overlordship, Brunei was rendered voiceless and unable to offer a counterfactual account of native economics, which in turn meant that its own political economy was rendered knowable by the victors – who in turn could only see and know it as piracy. In the years that followed Brunei would be pressed upon by other Western nations such as the United States to open up its economy even further and compelled to deliver assistance to Western governments and companies as they sought their riches in a land once regarded as foreboding and hostile.[84]

After having blasted the natives into submission, Mundy's narrative ends with the merry wedding of power and epistemology: His final chapter focused on the geology of Sarawak, outlining the lay of the land and pointing out where the best and biggest deposits of gold, iron, coal, antimony and tin were to be found.[85] Reminiscent of Raffles' mapping of Java that followed in the wake of its conquest, the defeat of Brunei and the capture of Labuan and Sarawak paved the way for *knowledge* of the country to be gained: First came the guns, then came the compass and the microscope.

84 Following Brunei's defeat at the hands of Britain, and the loss of Labuan, the kingdom was no longer able to effectively resist the demands of other Western states that pressed for the right of passage across Brunei waters and free trade on terms that were less favourable to Brunei. In 1854 the Convention between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Borneo [Brunei] was proclaimed and signed by President Franklin Pierce, America's fourteenth president (1853-1857). The America-Borneo Treaty bound Sultan Omar Ali and his descendants permanently, and Brunei was forced to open up its local economy to trade with the United States. Article II of the Convention granted American citizens the freedom to conduct trade with and in Brunei; Article III granted American citizens the right to buy property and land in Brunei; Article IV stated that no commodity or item could be prohibited from entering Brunei and being traded there; Article V stated that no duty exceeding one dollar per ton be imposed on any American vessel entering Brunei waters or its ports; Article VI stated that no duties would be imposed on any goods leaving Brunei; Article VII demanded that Brunei allow American warships to enter its waters and dock at its ports; Article IX stated that any American citizen found guilty of committing any crime in Brunei can only be tried and judged by an American court and by American law. The treaty was ratified on 11 July 1854 by Captain William J. McCloney of the United States Navy and Pangeran Endar Macotah [Mahkota] in Brunei ('Convention between the United States and Borneo').

85 Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*, vol. 2, 376-395.

6.e.iii Frank Marryat: *Fixing* the Bornean Pirate

> An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of fixity in the ideological construction of Otherness.
> – Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994)

While Keppel and Mundy's works were of a prosaic, matter-of-fact nature, the writing of Frank Marryat (1848) was sprinkled with traces of adventure and suspense. Himself the son of Captain Frederick Marryat, author of many sea-adventure stories, it is not surprising that he chose as his subject the life of James Brooke, whose unilateral 'war against piracy' was about to become a modern fable. Marryat's work offered an account of the survey conducted by the *HMS Samarang* as it charted the waters off Borneo, all the way to Hong Kong. The operations were then directed by Sir Edward Belcher, and Marryat's work depicted the life, customs, society and history of Borneo, including some studies of the native Dayak, Llanuns and men of Brunei and Sulu. Steven Runciman, in *The White Rajahs*, wrote of Marryat's mission in Sarawak thus:

> Three weeks after [Henry] Keppel's departure[, the] *HMS Samarang*, under Sir Edward Belcher, sailed up to Kuching. He had come to report officially on Borneo and James [Brooke] was anxious to impress him favourably. But he was less ready to be impressed. On the other hand, the younger members of the crew were charmed by James and his romantic career. From one of the midshipmen, Frank Marryat, son of the author of *Masterman Ready*, who wielded a lively pen and a far from inexpert pencil, we have a good description of the life that Europeans were then leading at Kuching. He had ample time for his observations, for, as the *Samarang* was starting to sail down the river to convey Belcher, with James, to inspect Brunei and the Borneo coast, she ran on a rock a mile below the town.[86]

Being arrested along the Borneo coast was not a fate reserved solely for the *HMS Samarang*, but also the subjects of Marryat's work – which came with twenty-two colour-tinted lithograph plates and many black-and-white vignettes. The coloured plates in the work were by F. M. Del and printed by M. and N. Hanhart Lithograph Printers, and they included a range of

86 Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, 77.

subjects such as scenes of Bruni (Brunei), Kuching, Mount Kinabalu, as well as scenes of Hong Kong and the Philippines.

While the landscape images were lively and animated, what stands out among the tinted lithographs are the full-page figure studies of native types, including the *Saghai Dyak, Loondoo Dyak, Serebis Dyak, Malay Chief of Sooloo,* and the *Ilanun Pirate*. All of the full-page figure studies are presented with no background whatsoever, totally removed from any landscape or social context; presenting each of them as a static idealised type, like a solitary object in a museum display case. The hyper-realism of the figure studies is evident in the extraordinary detail that went into the rendering of their costumes: the single-edged *kampilan* of the Ilanun warrior is perhaps one of the first detailed images of the weapon to appear in any English-made lithograph, as is the *mandau* in the hands of the Dayak. And yet the images present us with only full-frontal figure portraits of the individuals themselves, with no indication whatsoever of the cultural-linguistic differences between any of the ethnic groups. Unlike Nieuhof's images of genteel Batavian society with their connotations of urbane sociability, the ethnic types from Borneo that are to be found in Marryat's work are *all male*, and comprised *only* of warrior types; underscoring the theme of his work as an adventure, the objective of which was the pacification of the Borneo coastline and the eradication of native communities labelled 'piratical'.

The interesting thing about the images in Marryat's work is that the author himself was acutely aware of their arresting power and the dangers of misrepresentation. Himself an artist, Marryat had attempted many a drawing in his career and found the illustrations in books on travel and exploration wanting. He alluded to this in his foreword to the narrative, where he wrote:

> The engravings, which have appeared in too many of the Narratives of Journeys and Expeditions, give not only an imperfect, but even erroneous, idea of what they would describe. A hasty pencil sketch, from an unpractised hand, is made over to an artist to reduce to proportion; from him it passes to the hand of an engraver, and an interesting plate is produced by their joint labours. But, in making this up, the character and features of the individual are lost, or the scenery is composed of foliage not indigenous to the country, but introduced by the artist to make a good picture. In describing people and countries hitherto unknown, no description by the pen will equal one correct drawing.[87]

87 Marryat, *Borneo and the Indian Archipelago*, v-vi.

Cognisant of the fact that all images are simply that: imitations of the thing-in-itself, Marryat's Platonic censure of mimesis is nonetheless accompanied by his caveat that *correct drawings* can overcome the limitations of narrative description.

Just how such *correct drawings* could be produced may be intuited by the stark yet detailed images of native pirates that accompany his work. The fact that the plates *Saghai Dyak, Loondoo Dyak, Serebis Dyak, Malay Chief of Sooloo, Ilanun Pirate,* etc. have no background whatsoever compels the viewer to focus solely on the subjects of the plates, with little else to distract. But the plates have also removed these native types from their socio-cultural context, and all that can be seen and read off them are the details that are presented to the discerning eye: the spears, swords, daggers and other assorted weapons that adorn their bodies. Marryat may have approved the manner in which the native types were presented bare and shorn of any non-essential trappings, but these detailed images were instances of selective appropriation, artistic construction and 'making this up'. If the only conclusion that the reader could reach by looking at these masculine warrior images was that the natives of Borneo were piratical to the last, then such a conclusion would also fit neatly within the universe that Marryat had created in his account of Borneo and its people, that was presented as a den of brigands and cutthroats.

Marryat's narrative is sprinkled with accounts that support the warlike impression lent by the plates in his work: He wrote of Dayak children walking about wearing necklaces of human teeth around their necks[88] and their sharpened, razor-like teeth[89]; the headhunting ways of the Dayaks 'whose customs are nearly those of the American Indians'[90]; the people of Sooloo (Sulu) who 'patronise piracy of every description'[91]; the Ilanun pirates and the bounty on their heads[92]; and the tribes of Borneo in general who were 'but colonists for piratical purposes'[93] – in contrast to his portrayal of his host, James Brooke, whose 'kindness was beyond all bounds'.[94] Though no attempt was made to pictorially illustrate the boundless kindness of Brooke in colour or black and white, every attempt was made to capture the violent nature of his native adversaries, and as such the natives of Borneo that feature in

88 Ibid., 15.
89 Ibid., 79.
90 Ibid., 81.
91 Ibid., 41-42.
92 Ibid., 54 (and footnote '*').
93 Ibid., 60-62.
94 Ibid., 18.

Marryat's work could only be viewed according to the oppositional dialectic that framed them.

The reproduction of such images of colonised natives continued all the way to the end of the nineteenth century, after which lithographic plates gave way to the camera and photography held sway. One of the best works that appeared by the end of the century was Hadouin-Ritter's *Java's Bewoners in hun eigenaardig karakter en kleeder-dracht*, which featured a foreword by the travel writer M.T.H. Perelaer[95] – but the images therein comprised of portraits of native merchants, musicians and noblemen, for Java was, by then, configured as civilised. It was Borneo that was doomed from the start, having been cursed by the unfortunate legend of the Asiatic pirate. The legend *stuck*, and Borneo was *fixed* as a result; *and it could no longer be known otherwise*.

6.f *Knowing Borneo, Knowing the Pirate*: Confirmation Bias and Closing the Argument in the Writings of Keppel, Mundy and Marryat

> In the struggle between different representations, the representation socially recognised – that is to say as true – contains its own social force; and in the case of the social world, science gives those who hold it a monopoly of the legitimate viewpoint, of self-fulfilling prophesy.[96]
>
> – Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (1988)

The 'war on piracy' instigated by James Brooke and pursued by the likes of Keppel, Mundy and Marryat would usher in the era of gunboat diplomacy in no uncertain terms. Though clashes at sea had taken place long before, the defeat of Brunei at the hands of the British navy showed that Britain truly ruled the waves, and that oceans were territories to be conquered and claimed. In the decades that followed, naval power would be the deciding factor in many of the clashes between the Western colonial powers and their native Southeast Asian counterparts: During the Second Anglo-Burmese War, Rangoon would be pummelled by British ships, and the remnants of the Burmese fleet would be neutralised for good – the Burmese ten-gun

95 Hardouin and Ritter, *Java's Bewoners in hun eigenaardig karakter en kleeder-dracht*.
96 Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, 28.

man-of-war being no match for British vessels[97]; in 1871 Kuala Selangor would be bombarded by the *HMS Rinaldo*[98]; in 1873 the capital of Aceh would suffer a cannonade from the Dutch fleet; and in 1898 Manila would fall to American ships and marines.

That justifications were sought – and invariably found – for all these invasions across Southeast Asia should not come as a surprise to the reader today. What is noteworthy, however, was the fact that in most of these cases a consensus had already been arrived at long before hostilities commenced. The writings of Keppel, Mundy and Marryat are examples of this engineering of consensus at work, which inevitably led to the confirmation bias that can be readily read off their pages with a cursory glance. That these men thought alike and were in total agreement with one another is clear: Brooke himself acknowledged so in his journal, and noted that 'Keppel had really been my companion and friend; and he so thoroughly entered into my views for the suppression of piracy, and made them his own.'[99] They in turn showered upon Brooke the praises that he pined for, and were thus instrumental in the creation of the myth of the 'White Rajah' of Borneo – which would be taken up by successive generations of British writers throughout the Victorian era, such as Spenser St John, who likewise never hid his admiration for Brooke and who declared that he was 'my first and only chief, one of the builders of a greater Britain'.[100]

It is interesting to note that in the writings of Keppel, Mundy and Marryat all three military men wholly agreed with Brooke's claim that the disturbances in Borneo had to be solved with direct military intervention; an observation that would be unsurprising, considering that they lived in an age where war and commerce went hand-in-hand. Yet it is important to note that the company man John Anderson had likewise discovered all manner of intrigue and dissention in the courts of Sumatra; though in his case Anderson counselled for non-intervention instead – another stark difference between Anderson and his contemporaries which made him stand out among the crowd of company functionaries. But Anderson was never glorified for his efforts, while James Brooke would eventually

97 'The War In Burmah', 508-509.

98 'Bombardment of Kuala Selangore', p. 37

99 Brooke, quoted in Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*, vol. 2, 1.

100 Spenser St John, *Rajah Brooke*. In his work, Spencer St John argued in defence of Brooke: 'If his [Brooke's] advice had been followed, we would not now be troubled by the ambitions of France in the Hindu-Chinese regions, as his policy was to secure the independence of those Asiatic states, subject, however to the benevolence influence of England as the Paramount Power, an influence to be used for the good of the governed' (p. iii).

be elevated to the rank of empire-builder after his passing in 1868. Like Raffles, who was glorified long after his death, Brooke, too, would later grow to be larger than life. Just as Raffles had a species of pitcher-plant named after him, *Nepenthes rafflesiana*, so did Brooke: *Nepenthes rajah*, named by Joseph Dalton Hooker.

But the myth of the White Rajah of Borneo also required its constitutive Other, and that Other was more often than not the *native* Other whom Brooke had set out to *defeat* and *defend* at the same time. The Borneo pirate was perhaps the most important of the tropes that came to be attached to Borneo, and which defined Borneo in the writings of so many Europeans then and after. Almost a century after the passing of Brooke, Keppel, Mundy and Marryat, their writings would be picked and quoted in the work of Edward Owen Rutter, the novelist and traveller-scholar who served with the North Borneo Civil Service. In his work *The Pirate Wind: Tales of the Sea-Robbers of Malaya* (1930), Rutter selected sections from the works of the writers of the century before his own to grace his pages, and by doing so resurrected the myth of the Borneo pirate even as the sun of empire was about to set.[101]

The point that I have tried to emphasise in this chapter is that the signifier 'pirate' was one that was politically and culturally loaded, and not merely descriptive. There was, of course, robbery and piracy across the archipelago then (as there was all over the world); and the fact that ships were being boarded, looted and captured in Southeast Asian waters was neither novel nor unique: British, French, Dutch, Spanish and American warships were just as guilty of attacking and robbing the merchant vessels of other Western countries from the Seven Years' War of the eighteenth

101 Rutter's *The Pirate Wind* lists in its bibliography the works of Keppel, Mundy and Marryat. Rutter owned all of these works, and in his personal copy of the third edition of Keppel's work – which is in the author's personal collection – we can see that he had selected passages from the work that deal primarily with the subject of native piracy. Rutter highlighted and underlined sections from the following pages of Keppel's *The Expedition to Borneo:* In volume 1: pp. 3, 4, 200, 228, 229, 238, 239, 240, 242-243, 247, 250, 264-265, 267-268, 275-276 (on headhunting), 328 (where James Brooke described the Sultan of Brunei in unflattering terms), 373, 375, 383, 384, 387-389, 390-392, 393, 396, 409, 411, 424, 425, 426, 428. In volume II: pp. 2, 12, 13 (where Keppel described Rajah Muda Hashim as 'a wretched looking man'), 26, 27, 28, 40-41, 44-45, 49-51, 52, 54-55, 56-57, 60-61, 64, 65, 66-67, 69, 70, 79, 80, 89 (the attack on Patusan), 96-97, 99, 102-103, 104, 111-113, 121, 144-145 (where Brooke gives an account of the Malay kingdoms and their support of piracy, and the role of Arabs in supporting the pirates), 146, 153-155 (where Brooke justifies his war on piracy), 156, 165, 166-167, 172, 178-179, 231 (where Keppel concludes that there is no choice but to use the most excessive violence to destroy all pirate settlements and to instil fear in the hearts of the natives).

century to the Napoleonic Wars of the nineteenth. And while the Western powers were engaged in their 'war on piracy' for the sake of neutralising the pirate menace in Southeast Asian waters, it should be remembered that the very same region was also the stage for a host of Western bravos and privateers – such as James Brooke himself and also the Englishman Alexander Hare and the American gunrunner and adventurer Walter Gibson[102] – to strut about, knocking over native powers at a whim while elevating themselves in the process. If 'native warfare' was to be the justification for Western intervention in Southeast Asian affairs, then the company and military men who supported Brooke's efforts were evidently forgetful of the fact that a few decades earlier Europe had been the stage for scenes of mass slaughter, as the Napoleonic Wars consumed the lives of hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians alike: The casualties incurred at battles such as Austerlitz, Borodino and Waterloo were far greater than any local conflict in Southeast Asia at the time.

Notwithstanding the prevailing norm of the times, it would be wrong to suggest that piracy was somehow tolerated or condoned by the rulers of the various kingdoms and polities of Asia. For in many Asian countries then piracy was regarded as a serious crime indeed, and those caught and found guilty of piracy often had a grisly fate in store for them: Milton notes that in Japan the punishment meted out to pirates was a combination of crucifixion and impalement by spears, and 'sometimes so many spears were employed that the condemned man looked like a giant hedgehog'.[103]

In the case of nineteenth-century Southeast Asia however the use of the term 'pirate' was a case of meaning being determined by extra-linguistic considerations of power and economic-strategic interest. These were instances of naming where one side had the *power* to *name* and *define* the other, and invariably in all these instances the side that had the power to name – and thus to know, to judge and to punish – was the West. In this uneven contest of power and wills, it was the West that won not only the battles at sea, but also the linguistic battle for signification and definition; and was consequently afforded the luxury of not having to notice the blind spot that sat squarely in the centre of the 'pirate menace' discourse: For

102 Walter Gibson was another quirky character who attempted to make his mark in Southeast Asia. A former gunrunner and smuggler, he later relocated to Southeast Asia and was active in Sumatra until he was arrested by the Dutch, on the grounds that he had attempted to raise the flag of rebellion among the peoples of Sumatra. Gibson's case became a serious political issue and eventually compelled the US government to appeal to the Dutch for his release. See Pierce, 'Message from the President of the United States of America'.

103 Milton, *Samurai William*, 102.

James Brooke may have waged war against the 'pirates' whom he accused of robbing ships, but he was the one who ultimately bagged a kingdom for himself and his descendants[104] – and perpetuated the stereotype of the Borneo pirate and headhunter for more than a century.[105]

104 The Brooke dynasty's incursions into Brunei territory did not stop after the defeat of Brunei. In 1890 Charles Brooke, the successor to James Brooke, captured the territory of Limbang and the flag of Sarawak was raised there on 17 March 1890. The Sultan of Brunei, incensed by the loss of Limbang, appealed to the Ottoman Empire for help and wrote to Sultan Abdul Hamid of Turkey personally, though the appeal never reached its destination as the despatch was intercepted by the British in Singapore.

105 The tropes of the Borneo pirate and headhunter would remain a common theme in the writings on Sarawak even after the death of James Brooke. Later Margaret Brooke (wife of Charles Brooke) and Sylvia Brooke (wife of Vyner Brooke) would also take to the pen, and in their writings the theme of violent marauders, pirates and headhunters would be regurgitated time and again. See Brooke, *My Life in Sarawak*, and Brooke, *Queen of the Head-Hunters*.

7 Crawfurd's Burma as the Torpid 'Land of Tyranny'

> The country was universally cultivated… [but] the impression left upon the mind of Dr Wallich and myself, regarding the extent of industry and the amount of inhabitants, was not, however, favourable. There was no bustle, no activity, but a stillness and tranquillity without animation.[1]
>
> – John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy to the Court of Ava* (1829)

7.a Meddling with Burma: John Crawfurd and the East India Company's 'War on Tyranny'

> Those who are capable of tyranny are capable of perjury to sustain it.
>
> – Lysander Spooner, *An Essay on the Trial by Jury* (1852)

If Borneo had been imagined and represented as the 'den of pirates', a similar fate was in store for other parts of Southeast Asia. In the process of being continuously defined and redefined, these places would eventually be located in a number of ways – geographically on the map, but also discursively within the mental landscape of the European imaginary.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, this process of imagining Southeast Asia was not a uniform one: Various discursive strategies were employed by different actors and agents, creating a complex but interconnected patchwork of colonial imaginaries that conceived and saw the different parts of the region in many different ways. Raffles had consigned Java to the museum of empire, while Anderson had represented Sumatra as a market open for business. Keppel, Mundy and Marryat in turn had conflated Borneo with the trope of the Asiatic pirate, which went hand in hand with Brooke's own self-declared 'war against piracy'. Another kingdom that would be radically reimagined by the outsider's arresting gaze was Burma – it would be equated with Asiatic tyranny and stupor – though at the beginning of the process of knowing the kingdom there was also the confounding question of *where* it was and *where* it should be located.

Though Burma/Myanmar today is seen as a Southeast Asian country, and has become a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

1 Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy… Ava*, 127.

(ASEAN),[2] few may realise that up to World War I it was often equally regarded as an extension of the wider Indian world. One of the reasons for the location of Burma within the broader ambit of the Indian universe was that it had come to be known by and to Europeans who were themselves members of the colonial enterprise in India, notably during the era of the East India Company; and that the first instances of contact between Britain and Burma were managed by those company functionaries who were themselves old India hands.

Among the men who were responsible for the framing and representation of Burma was none other than the Scotsman John Crawfurd (1783-1868), who had joined the East India Company as a surgeon, and who had first served in India, having been posted to Delhi and Agra.[3] Crawfurd, as we had seen earlier, was a member of the British force that occupied Java under the leadership of Lord Minto. Hannigan's work on Raffles suggests that Crawfurd and Raffles never really did get along well, and that Crawfurd may have been resentful of being placed in a subordinate position with regards to the latter.[4]

Three years after Raffles' *The History of Java* (1817) was published, Crawfurd's own work – which was much longer and broader in scope, and which came in three volumes as compared to Raffles' two – was published.

2 Burma became a member of ASEAN in 1997, after Laos and Vietnam. At the time it was given a ranking of 0.524 on the UNDP Human Development Index, making it the lowest in the region. In 2014 Burma/Myanmar finally joined the ASEAN Regional Infrastructure Fund, as the last member of ASEAN to do so.

3 By the time he was sent on his mission to Ava, John Crawfurd was already an old India hand who had served the East India Company in many parts of India and Southeast Asia. He had served as the British Resident at the court of Jogjakarta between 1811 and 1816, and in 1821 Lord Hastings (then governor-general of India) sent him on a mission to the court of Siam and Cochinchina to ascertain their attitude towards Europeans and the British in particular. Between 1823 to 1826 he was based in Singapore, and though Stamford Raffles is widely regarded (still) as the founder of Singapore, Chew has argued that 'it was not Raffles but John Crawfurd who made Singapore a British possession. Crawfurd, who had been appointed in April 1823 as second British Resident, arrived in Singapore on 27 May to take charge of the settlement. Raffles left Singapore for good on 9 June' (Chew, 'Dr John Crawfurd (1783-1868)'). In August 1824 Crawfurd negotiated the treaty between the East India Company and Sultan Hussein Shah and the Temenggung, whereby the British would be given control of Singapore. In the same year the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 led to Holland giving up all claims to Singapore, thereby affording Crawfurd the time and opportunity to design and build the colony. Crawfurd encouraged further migration into Singapore, and he turned it into a free port – which effectively lured more commercial vessels to the island at the expense of Dutch ports such as Batavia. Crawfurd left Singapore in 1826, and he was then assigned to Burma on a diplomatic mission for the Anglo-Indian government to negotiate with King Bagyidaw following the defeat of Burma at the First Anglo-Burmese War.

4 Hannigan, *Raffles and the British Invasion of Java.*

Crawfurd entitled his mammoth work *History of the Indian Archipelago* (1820), and in the very title itself we can already see how India loomed large in his worldview and calculations, which in turn located the entire archipelago within the wider orbit of Indian civilisation and history. In the preface before his introduction to the book Crawfurd noted that 'during a residence in that island (Java) of nearly six years, he had the honour to fill some of the principle civil and political offices of the local government, and thus enjoyed opportunities of acquiring information regarding the country and its inhabitants, *which no British subject is again likely, for a long time, to possess*' (emphasis mine) – a somewhat blatant instance of one-upmanship against his contemporary Raffles, with whose account of Java Crawfurd was not terribly impressed.

It cannot be denied that Crawfurd's *History of the Indian Archipelago* was much grander in scope than Raffles' *History of Java*, which hat was focused on that island alone.[5] Casting his net much wider, Crawfurd attempted a history of what would later come to be known as the Southeast Asian or Indonesian archipelago – and in some respects his work anticipated that of Alfred Russel Wallace,[6] which introduced the term 'Malay Archipelago' fifty years later. More than a century before the signifier 'Southeast Asia' came into common usage, Crawfurd the roving spermologer-bookwright had already begun to assemble the parts of the archipelago together into a singular entity that shared common characteristics – though these common features were, for him, less essential and more geographical in nature.[7]

5 By the end of his career as a company functionary, Crawfurd produced several books on Southeast Asia and also contributed to a three-volume study of China: Murray et al., *A Historical and Descriptive Account of China*.

6 Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago*.

7 Crawfurd's *History of the Indian Archipelago* (1820) was, at the time of its publication, the most extensive and comprehensive account of the history, geography, culture and languages of maritime Southeast Asia ever written in the English language – far surpassing the works of Marsden (*The History of Sumatra*) and Raffles (*The History of Java*). In the introduction to the first volume he outlined the geographical extent of the region he intended to write about, and noted that the archipelago could be divided into four distinct groups of islands, ranked according to size: The first rank consisted of the larger islands of Borneo (Kalimantan), New Guinea and Sumatra; the second consisted of the islands of Java and (oddly enough) the Malayan Peninsula; the third rank consisted of the islands of Bali, Lombok, Sulawesi (Celebes), the Moluccas and the islands of the Philippines; and the fourth rank consisted of all the other smaller islands of the region (Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago*, vol. 1, 3-7). Additionally, Crawfurd divided the region into five distinct sea zones (vol. 1, 5), and introduced an explicit ethnic-cultural hierarchy that distinguished between the 'more civilised' and 'less civilised' natives of the archipelago. He maintained that civilisation had arrived to the region from the West (vol. 1, 8) and argued that the spread and development of civilised communities across the region was

What is interesting about Crawfurd's early attempt to bring together the archipelago is that he focused solely on *maritime* Southeast Asia and disregarded the rest of the region that would later be labelled *mainland*

not equal: The islands of Sumatra and Java, along with the Malayan Peninsula, were, for him, the 'most civilised' parts of Southeast Asia then (vol. 1, 8), while civilisation had only begun to develop in the second division of the archipelago, in places such as Celebes (Sulawesi) (vol. 1, 8-9). The third division of the archipelago was seen as the least developed and civilised, and whose economy was at the most basic level, focused mainly on the production of cloves and other spices. Conversely the fourth division (which comprised of Sulu and other parts of the southern Philippines) was regarded as being 'more civilised than the third, but less civilised than the first and second' (vol. 1, 10). Here it was clear that Crawfurd's history of the archipelago was not merely a recounting of historical data, but he had also introduced a Eurocentric – and obviously subjective – typography that ordered and ranked the communities of Southeast Asia according to a criteria of development and civilisation that was clearly not indigenous. The first volume of the work consisted of four books divided into seventeen chapters, which looked at the physical form of the natives of the archipelago, the manners and customs of the natives, the domestic ceremonies of the natives, the games and amusements of the natives, the manner of foreign settlers, the useful arts of the archipelago, the dress of the native communities, the mode of native warfare, the development of arithmetic among the natives, the calendar and mode of calculating time among the natives, navigation among the native mariners, medicine and local music, husbandry among the native agrarian communities, the materials for food used and consumed by the native communities, standards of luxury among the local communities, items of local manufacture and items made for export beyond the archipelago. The second volume consisted of three books divided into twenty-one chapters that look at the language and literature of Java, the language and literature of the Malays, the language and literature of Celebes (Sulawesi), the minor languages of the other communities, the character of Polynesian languages, the local vocabularies, ancient religion of the communities of the archipelago, the religion of present-day Bali, the character of Islam in the archipelago, the state of Christianity in the archipelago, the history of the archipelago, the ancient history of Java, the spread of Islam in Java, the history of the Javanese, the history of the Malays, the history of Celebes (Sulawesi), the history of the Portuguese and their presence in the region, the history of the Dutch and their presence in the region, the history of the Spanish in the region, the major events that have shaped the development of the archipelago. The third volume was divided into two books, which consisted of ten chapters that delved into the subject of the form and system of government among the natives, the classification and distribution of the peoples of the archipelago, the mode of collecting public revenue, the laws of the native states and communities, the domestic and internal commerce within the archipelago, the archipelago's commerce with other Asian nations, the archipelago's commerce with European nations, commerce between the colonies and European empires in the East, a general description of articles for export out of and articles for import into the region. Like Raffles, Crawfurd was dismissive of the other European powers that had arrived in the region and was concerned about the power and influence of the Dutch and Spanish, who were the main rivals of the British in the archipelago (vol. 2, book 7, pp. 391-409, 410-444, 444-480; vol. 3, book 9, pp. 211-343). Notwithstanding his own rivalry with Stamford Raffles, Crawfurd's work shared very similar concerns with Raffles' own, which were to ensure that British commercial and military power would be extended across the Southeast Asian archipelago and that both local native and other European resistance would be contained and defeated in due course.

Southeast Asia. 'The Western boundary of the Archipelago', he wrote, 'is formed by the Malayan Peninsula and Sumatra'[8] – which meant that the kingdoms of Siam and Burma were not seen as part of the region then. So *where* was the rest of Southeast Asia, and *where* in particular was *Burma*?

The location of Burma – in the wider sense of its geographical placing as well as its ranking in the order of history and societal-civilisational development – was never a given fact that was self-evident, but rather a *process* that was contested and impacted upon by a plethora of external variable factors. And this process – of locating, identifying, classifying and subsequently *arresting* the location of Burma – was never an innocent one either; for it was Burma's misfortune to be where it was, right next to the Bay of Bengal and the centre of the East India Company's growing military-economic complex. Like Sumatra, Burma would come to be known; and like Java and Borneo, it would be ushered into the order of colonial knowledge and power at the tip of a bayonet.

By the nineteenth century Burma was a kingdom that was aware of how precarious its position was. The geographical location of Burma meant that it was at the crossroads between two greater Asian powers – China and India – and it had experienced invasions from the north in the past. To the east Burma was faced with its arch-rival, the Kingdom of Siam, and the relationship between the two kingdoms was anything but cordial. Successive Burmese rulers had attempted to secure the borders of the Burmese kingdom that was based in the Irrawaddy Delta area by first securing the mountainous regions to the west, north and east of the kingdom, which happened to be the highland territories of other ethnic groups such as the Chins, Kachins and Shan peoples. This, in effect, meant that the Burmese kingdom had long since been in a state of unending conflict with other highland communities who were resentful of Burmese control over their territories. When King Bagyidaw ascended to the throne in 1819, he inherited a kingdom that was already facing the prospect of conflict in Assam and Manipur, and he ordered his army – led by General Bandula – to regain control of Assam as well as Arakan.[9]

By that time Burma was forced to contend with another greater power that seemed bent on reducing its own: the British. The arrival of the East India Company that was announced in no uncertain terms by the victory of Robert Clive's force against the army of Siraj ud-Daulah at Plassey (Palasi) in Bengal in 1757 meant that Burma was now faced with a more powerful adversary, and as a result the kingdom reasserted itself by attempting to

8 Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago*, vol. 1, 5.

9 Steinberg, *In Search of Southeast Asia*, 'Burma 1752-1878', 104-105.

secure the regions adjacent to Bengal.[10] From the Burmese perspective this move was a rational and strategic one that sought to protect its frontier and to prevent the British from supporting the neighbouring communities who were seen as hostile to Burmese rule; and King Bagyidaw was merely following the same policy of offensive deterrence that had been pursued by the rulers of the Konbaung dynasty before him, such as Alaungp'aya, Hsinbyushin (r. 1763-1776) and Bodawp'aya (r. 1782-1819). However, this proved to be a fateful decision, for Burma's manoeuvres in Assam and Arakan were in turn seen by the British as an act of provocation, and when General Bandula's forces moved on to an island in the middle of the Naaf River, the Rubicon was crossed: It was upon this pretext that the British began to mobilise their forces and the First Anglo-Burmese War was fought in 1824-1826.

The First Anglo-Burmese War ended with a humiliating defeat for the Burmese. Despite the bombast of the Burmese ruler, in reality the power of King Bagyidaw was dispersed throughout the kingdom and not nearly as centralised as the administrative structure and chain of command of the East India Company. Steinberg has pointed out that on the ground level the provincial government in Burma 'was for the most part hereditary government by a provincial elite that had firm roots in the provinces', and that the Burmese army was made up of peasant levies who would be assembled at the behest of their local feudal lords in times of crisis.[11] (By contrast, the East India Company had by then a private army of more than 260,000 soldiers based across India.[12])

Though the Burmese army was able to quell the revolts that occurred among the other communities that encircled the Irrawaddy Delta, it proved to be no match against the combined arms of the East India Company. Rangoon was overrun by the British in May 1824, and by 1825 the British were on their way to Ava. King Bagyidaw was eventually forced to accept the terms of the Treaty of Yandabo on 24 February 1826, which stipulated that Burmese forces had to withdraw from Assam and Manipur while also conceding Arakan and Tenasserim to the East India Company. In addition

10 The Konbaung dynasty, of which King Bagyidaw was a member, was in fact started around the same time that the British made their presence felt in India: In 1752 Alaungp'aya rose to power and in 1757 (the same year that Clive triumphed at the Battle of Plassey) he defeated the forces of the Mon-speaking Kingdom of Pegu. From 1757 to 1769 Burma was constantly at war, against the Tai-speaking peoples of the Shan plateau region, against invading Chinese forces from the north, and against the Siamese to the east. Burma reached the peak of its power with the defeat of the Siamese kingdom of Ayudhya in 1767, and the Burmese were ruthless in their military campaign: Ayudhya was sacked and burned to the ground.

11 Steinberg, *In Search of Southeast Asia*, 31.

12 Dalrymple, 'The East India Company'.

to these loses, the Burmese kingdom was forced to pay the hefty sum of five million dollars, which drove the kingdom to the brink of ruin.[13]

It was shortly after this debacle that John Crawfurd (then based in Rangoon as its civil commissioner after his stint in Singapore[14]) received his orders – on 1 September 1826 – to sail up the Irrawaddy River to meet with King Bagyidaw and to deliver the terms that had been set by the Anglo-Indian government.[15] Among the results of this mission was the account of the trip to Ava that came in the form of his book, *A Journal of an Embassy to the Court of Ava* (1829).

Crawfurd's *Journal* was written after the signing of the Treaty of Yandabo between Britain and Burma at Yandabo. Relatively little was known of Burma at the time, and the few accounts of the kingdom were penned by men who had taken part in the Anglo-Burmese conflict, such as Major John James Snodgrass, whose narrative of the war against Burma had been published in 1827.[16] Additionally, Crawfurd cited the works of Colonels Symes (1795) and Cox (1821), noting that the former was perhaps 'the most complete and satisfactory' that had been hitherto published.[17] Before looking at Crawfurd's writing on Burma it would be useful for us to pause a moment and consider the work of Snodgrass, whose account of the First Anglo-Burmese War would set the tone for many other works on that country, written as it was at a time when 'Burmese studies' was yet to come into its own.

7.b Snodgrass Sets the Tone: Framing Burma as Both a *Threat* and a *Prize*

> There is no country in the east so well situated for an inlet to our trade; and under a better form of government a ready market would be found for a large consumption of British merchandise.[18]
>
> – Major John J. Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War* (1827)

Major John J. Snodgrass' account of the First Anglo-Burmese War was written from the viewpoint of a British officer serving under the East India

13 Steinberg, *In Search of Southeast Asia*, 'Provincial Powers', 105.
14 Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy... Ava*, Appendix 1, p. 1.
15 Ibid., Appendix 1, p. 1.
16 Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*.
17 Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy... Ava*, 515.
18 Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, 287.

Company's army. He was the military secretary to Sir Archibald Campbell, commander of the expedition to Rangoon, and later served as the assistant political agent of the British in Ava. (Another personality who took part in the war was James Brooke, who was wounded in combat and would later return to Southeast Asia to make his fortune in Borneo.[19]) From the outset it is clear that Snodgrass' work was written for a British readership back home, and Snodgrass dedicated his work to Sir Edward Paget, commander-in-chief of the East India Company's forces in India.

Unlike the next generation of colonial scholars of Southeast Asia, or even those before him such as Raffles, Snodgrass' account was economical with its embellishments: The narrative he offered was without much literary furbelow, and read as a rather dry though factual blow-by-blow account of the Anglo-Burmese conflict. Burma was, at the outset, framed as a *threat* to the East India Company and its dominions in Bengal. The war, he noted, was started on the grounds that Burma was growing more ambitious and that the Burmese kingdom wished to extend its power to the adjacent states of Manipur, Assam and Arakan; which brought it precariously close to the territories that had come under the sway of the East India Company that was then based in Calcutta, Bengal. Hostilities began in April 1824, when the British began to assemble their forces in Calcutta, before they were despatched to Port Cornwallis in the Andamans prior to the attack on Rangoon. The 13th and 38th Regiments of the Bengal Division, along with two companies of artillery, were selected for the invasion; the total force of British troops (including Indian Sepoys) amounting to around 5,000 to 6,000 men.

Though later in the work Snodgrass' narrative grew more bellicose and ultimately triumphalist in tone and tenor, earlier in the text he conceded that the Anglo-Burmese War was truly 'an unequal contest'.[20] In his conclusion he noted that 'no nation ever commenced hostilities so thoroughly ignorant of the power and resources of their adversaries, and so grossly deceived as to their own strength and means'.[21]

Yet despite the fact that the British forces were far better equipped than their Burmese adversaries, and that the outcome of the conflict was likely to be in Britain's favour, Snodgrass did not hesitate to pour scorn upon his opponents. The Burmese commanders and leaders were described by him as 'provincial tyrants of the Burmhan [sic] empire, whose power, when

19 'The Late Rajah Sir James Brooke', 8.
20 Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, 6.
21 Ibid., 296.

distant from the seat of government, is absolute and uncontrolled, and who, cruel alike from nature and from habit, are seldom to be restrained in their capricious acts of violence and injustice, except by bribery or interest'.[22] The sorry state of the Burmese army, which was made up of men forced into combat, was accounted for by Snodgrass as a result of the fact that they had been pressed into service and had had their families taken as hostages by their rulers, and consequently 'desertion or misconduct in the field (would be) punished by the barbarous sacrifice of their female relatives'.[23] From the very first chapter Snodgrass had drawn a clear distinction between the invading British and the Burmese, who were, after all, defending the territory of their kingdom. The Burmese were cast in a decidedly negative light – their king described as 'deluded' and 'surrounded by flatterers'[24]; their leaders corrupt, cruel and tyrannical[25]; while the ordinary peasant levies weak, dispirited and cowardly.[26]

Snodgrass maintained – predictably – that the root cause of the First Anglo-Burmese War lay in Burma's desire to initiate an offensive against the British in India,[27] though at no point is any evidence conjured up to back up this claim. Once the invasion had begun in earnest however, Snodgrass admitted that it was a ruthless and bloody affair, and remarked that 'our first encounters with the troops of Ava were sanguinary and revolting',[28] and that the regular conventions of combat were no longer adhered to. His narrative ends with the expected defeat of the Burmese forces and the signing of the Treaty of Yandabo; and Snodgrass' concluding chapter highlights the vast economic potential that Burma had to offer then, which included gold, lead, tin, iron, timber and other products – his only complaint being that these resources could and would have been better exploited under a government different from that of the ruler of Burma.[29]

Snodgrass was in no doubt – and left the reader in no doubt either – of the root cause of Burma's downfall: Though he lamented the waste of Burma's resources and the inefficiency of its government and army, he located the cause of the country's misfortunes in the palace itself. Again and again in his work, Snodgrass painted a decidedly unflattering portrait

22 Ibid., 9-10.
23 Ibid., 7.
24 Ibid., 295, 296.
25 Ibid., 266-267, 271-273, 287, 293.
26 Ibid., 7-11, 21-22.
27 Ibid., 23.
28 Ibid., 31.
29 Ibid., 286, 287-298.

of King Bagyidaw of Burma, who was then cast in the light of the Asiatic despot and tyrant – a value-loaded trope that would recur endlessly in so many colonial narratives throughout the nineteenth century. By the end of his account of the war Snodgrass' negative depiction of the Burmese king culminates in a charivari of insults, to the point of gloating at the defeat of the other. Adding to the humiliation that had been heaped onto the subdued kingdom, Snodgrass – addressing a European readership for whom the book was intended – smugly addresses the reader as he takes a final jab at King Bagyidaw: 'Let him vaunt and boast, and let us smile at his harmless vanity and arrogant imbecility'.[30]

Burma had suffered its first major defeat at the hands of a Western power; and with Western condescension there soon followed the order of colonial knowledge. Its borders flung open, Burma was now ready to be *known*.

7.c Weighed Down by the Maudlin Tyrant: Crawfurd's *Static* Burma

> He was an intelligent man and an able servant of his firm, but he was one of those Englishmen – common, unfortunately – who should never be allowed to set foot in the East.
>
> – George Orwell, *Burmese Days* (1934)

Published in 1829, three years after John Anderson's account of his survey of Sumatra, John Crawfurd's *Journal of an Embassy to the Court of Ava*[31] was one of the first major works on the Kingdom of Burma. It was, like so many of the works on Southeast Asia that were produced during the era of colonial-capitalism, a book that was written primarily for an audience back home in England; and its intended readership included those who held the reins of power in London. Henry Keppel would dedicate his book to the Earl of Albermarle, his father; while Rodney Mundy would dedicate his to the Earl of Auckland; but John Crawfurd had raised the bar much higher by dedicating his work on Burma to none other than King George IV himself.

From the start Crawfurd's dedication to his king had set the tone for the rest of his work, and introduced a neat oppositional dialectic between good and evil, enlightenment and tyranny. It began thus: 'May it please

30 Ibid., 298.

31 Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy... Ava*.

your Majesty; I humbly hope that a faithful account of barbarous countries suffering under slavery and superstition may be no unwelcome offering to the Sovereign of the greatest of free nations.'[32] Crawfurd invited King George IV to contemplate 'the unhappy lot of Tyrants, debased and corrupted by absolute power', with the hope that 'your Majesty may see new reason to be gratified that with constitutional exertion of authority by which you redress the grievances of your subjects, and enlarge the fabric of civil and religious liberty, for the preservation of which the illustrious House of Brunswick was called the Throne of Great Britain'.[33] Additionally, Crawfurd stated his hope that his work would be 'sufficient to show the beneficial power of the English Constitution, even in its remote and faint influence; and to awaken sanguine hopes of the blessings of which await *your Indian subjects*, when the benefits of that Constitution shall be fully and directly imparted to them, under your Majesty's paternal administration' (emphasis mine).[34]

Here, in Crawfurd's dedication, we can already see the stage-setting and subject-positioning that Kabbani alludes to when she notes how such texts written by colonial functionaries of the nineteenth century were self-referential in the manner that they addressed a familiar audience/readership back home; and how – despite the universal claims that were often made – such works were really particular and exclusive in the way that they addressed the fellow countrymen of the respective authors themselves, in terms that were familiar.[35] Crawfurd addresses *his* ruler while describing *another*; and alludes to the empire that he belonged to, served and helped to build. That empire was in turn (then) centred in *India*, and his writing on Burma – like his works on Siam, Cochinchina and the Southeast Asian archipelago – would constantly foreground India as the centre of imperial power, second only to London.

That Crawfurd could only see Burma through his Anglo-Indian lens was a trait that was not unique to him alone, for he was after all a servant of the East India Company and the Anglo-Indian government. And if India loomed large in his worldview, then the same could be said of the other earlier writers on Southeast Asia like William Marsden – who was so admired by Crawfurd, Raffles and Anderson alike – who likewise applied his pen to Indian subjects before he turned to Southeast Asia.[36]

32 Ibid., i.

33 Ibid., i.

34 Ibid., i.

35 Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, xi.

36 William Marsden had written on numerous subjects related to India and Indian culture before he began working on Southeast Asia. In 1790 he published his work on the chronology of

The other feature of Crawfurd's work – like his journal of his visit to Siam and Cochinchina – is that it was, fundamentally, a *report*. And that report was intended for the desks of the colonial governors in India and the East India Company's board of directors, who in turn served the interests of their country and their king. Like John Anderson whose work on Sumatra was primarily meant for internal company consumption, Crawfurd had embarked on his (final) mission in service of the company and among the many tasks that were given to him was the task of data-collecting and negotiating on their behalf.[37] The Anglo-Indian government in turn wished him 'to regulate [his] discussions with the Court of Ava in the spirit of the Board's observations', cognisant of the fact that Britain then had an enormous advantage over Burma.[38] Crawfurd was directed to press further with Britain's demands, while not making *any* clear concessions to the Burmese in turn.[39]

India, which was later shared with the members of the Royal Society in London. In his account of Indian chronology and the zodiac, Marsden argued that the same methods of measuring time were used by Southeast Asians, notably the Burmese and Siamese (Marsden, 'On the Chronology of the Hindoos', 575-577).

37 Crawfurd includes the entire mission statement given to him by the company in the appendices of his work (Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy... Ava*, Appendix 1, 1-7).

38 Ibid., Appendix 1, 4.

39 The instructions handed to Crawfurd were unclear. He was expected to make further demands on the Burmese, but not to the extent of arousing resentment or suspicion at the court of Ava. At the same time, the company was unwilling to enter into any commercial dealings which may not be of lasting economic value. As the orders to Crawfurd stated: 'The Governor-General in Council [in India], concurring generally in sentiments expressed by that Board, a copy of whose letter will be found in the accompanying extract from the proceedings of the Government [in India], in the Territorial Department, you will regulate your discussions with the Court of Ava, in the spirit of the Board's observations, adopting the principle of perfect equality and reciprocity, as stated in the third paragraph of your letter, and refraining from any attempt to obtain exclusive privileges. These, it is probable, would be viewed with jealousy by the Burman ministers, and, if conceded, might be obtained at a greater sacrifice of what we would have to yield, as an equivalent, would then be desirable, we should thus be deprived of turning to better advantage the rights we possess under the Treaty to the third and fourth instalments [owed by Burma to Britain]. The relinquishments of parts or the whole of these instalments, as you observe, is what we have to offer in return for commercial privileges; but it would appear to his Lordship in the Council that it would not be politic to propose such an equivalent at the present time; as, independently of other considerations, we should thereby forego the powerful hold we have on the Burmese, to obtain from them a satisfactory adjustment to some other point of greater importance, perhaps, than the exclusive commercial privileges contemplated, which, after all, might never come into operation on a great scale' (ibid., Appendix, 4). Thus in the mission statement itself it was evident that the East India Company and the colonial government in India did not entertain high hopes of an economically prosperous and rewarding relationship with Burma at any time in the future. On a somewhat pessimistic note,

Handed his marching orders, Crawfurd and his companions – Lieutenant Chester, Lieutenant Cox, Lieutenant de Montmorency, Dr Steward, Dr Nathaniel Wallich and Mr Judson of the American Missionary Society – would take thirty days to travel up the Irrawaddy River from Rangoon to Ava[40] on board the *Diana*, the first steamship to make an appearance in British India (and which was used during the first war against the Burmese).[41] Burma's centre of power was then located north of Rangoon at Ava, the seat of the ancient kingdom of the fourteenth century whose foundations had been laid by Thadominbya in 1364. But whatever glories that Ava may have possessed in the past were all but lost by the age of steam and the modern gunboat, and Crawfurd was keen to impress upon his Burmese hosts that the new power in the East Indies was the British Empire.

Notwithstanding the might of the empire behind him, even the artillery and gunboats of the East India Company could not save Crawfurd from the 'swarms of mosquitoes' that plagued him at the beginning of his journey – a complaint that he shared with that other mosquito-hating company man, John Anderson.[42] But while Anderson had gone the extra mile to dispel the stories of piracy and headhunting that had spooked the merchants of the company and prevented them from trading in Sumatra, Crawfurd's description of the land and people of Burma was less flattering and comparable to Raffles' view of the Javanese, who were looked upon with patronising contempt. It was here, in his depiction of the Burmese, that Crawfurd's invention of Burma as the land of tyranny came into being; and where the differences between his own subject-position and those he wrote about came into bold relief. While he had been directed by the company board to adopt 'the principle of perfect equality and reciprocity' in his dealings with the Burmese,[43] there was nothing in them that he saw equal to himself, his company and his nation.

the statement concluded that 'in the existing uncertainty, with regard to the ultimate disposal of our territorial acquisitions on the Martaban and Tennasserim coast, his Lordship in Council would be unwilling to enter into any complex commercial arrangements which, after all, might prove to be of any practical value' (ibid., Appendix, 4).

40 Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy... Ava*, 89.

41 Ibid., 2. The *Diana* was used by the European members of the expedition and it was on board the steamboat that Crawfurd and his companions slept. Additionally, there were five other native boats that were used by the Indian sepoys who were also part of the force, along with twenty-eight grenadiers and light infantrymen of the 87th King's Regiment.

42 Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy... Ava*, 4-5.

43 Ibid., Appendix 1, 4.

Of the Burmese in general, Crawfurd was roundly dismissive. He described their manners as pompous and prone to flattery,[44] rarely punctual,[45] overly formal,[46] lacking vim and verve and never prepared for discussions.[47] It in art of war they were 'at the very lowest scale' in terms of courage and conduct[48]; their treatment of prisoners was described as cruel and murderous,[49] with their captives universally condemned to slavery.[50] Crawfurd's opinion of the Burman courtiers and officials he met was generally poor, with most of them brushed aside as a lot of fawning lickspittles – though he did regard the Wungyi of Pegu as being more cultivated than the rest, with 'the manners of an Asiatic gentleman'.[51] The king's favourite, however, was described as 'flippant and undignified' and 'utterly unprincipled'[52] – a judgement that would later be generalised to most of the members of the Burmese government.

As the delegation got closer to Ava, the local Kyi-wun – or Lord of the Granaries – gifted Crawfurd and his companions a golden goblet each (Crawfurd, meticulous as ever, weighed his at eleven and a half rupees); a gesture that may not have placated the British, and which was reminiscent of Todorov's tale of the Aztec king who sent to the invading Conquistadors gifts of gold, which merely spurred them ever onwards.[53] Crawfurd's main concern, which bordered on a complaint, was that the Burmese were unable and unwilling to accept the fact that they were defeated, and that they were now standing before a much more powerful adversary whose reach had extended across the globe: 'These half-civilisations', he noted,

> notwithstanding their knowledge of the power of our Eastern empire, feel the utmost repugnance to placing themselves on a level with a mere

44 Ibid., 96, 145.
45 Ibid., 97, 147, 255, 263.
46 Ibid., 105.
47 Ibid., 107, 147.
48 Ibid., 337-338.
49 Ibid., 244-246.
50 Ibid., 246.
51 At Pegu the delegation met with the *Wungyi*, who had come to represent the king of Burma and act as the latter's emissary and go-between. Crawfurd described the *Wungyi* thus: 'The *Wungyi* was a man of forty-five, as he informed us himself. He was tall for a Burman, and instead of the squat form which distinguishes the race generally, his figure was slender; his complexion, much fairer than usual; and his features, particularly his nose, more distinct and better formed than common: His eyes, however, were Chinese. His manners were cheerful, unconstrained, and not undignified. He had, in short, the manners of an Asiatic gentleman' (Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy... Ava*, 12).
52 Ibid., 114.
53 Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, 127.

> viceroy. In the discussions that took place under the British cannon at Yandabo, within forty miles of the capital, and when the government of Ava was humiliated to the last degree, the Burman Commissioners, feigning to forget that they were negotiating with the *Indian government*, made difficulties about the appointment of resident ambassadors, as provided for by the Treaty of Yandabo, alleging the great distance of England from their country! *It was necessary to remind them, in language not to be misunderstood, that Calcutta, not London, was to be the place of residence of the Burman ambassador.* (Emphasis mine)[54]

Much of Crawfurd's consternation stemmed from his suspicion – which was possibly true – that the Burmese were doing everything they could to halt the progress of the *Diana* as it steamed up the Irrawaddy *en route* to Ava. He bemoaned their vain attempts to dispute the terms of the Treaty of Yandabo, and he was exasperated when they argued that the 'royal city' of the Burmese was Rangoon (which had, by then, been attacked by the British) and not Ava.[55] On the subject of Burmese diplomacy, Crawfurd's own assessment was dim: They were, for him,

> importunate, oblique but childish. The Burmese want the deep artifice and dexterity of the Hindoos and other Asiatics; but as politicians they are not less fraudulent or unprincipled. It is considered wisdom in a Burman negotiator to attempt to overreach his antagonist by every possible artifice. Difficulties are thrown in the way at every step, and in the possible hope of gaining some point or another; and this, too, in cases where it might appear to other people wise and prudent to conciliate or accommodate.[56]

That the Burmese kingdom had lost the territories of Assam, Arakan and Manipur – and with Tenasserim for all intents and purposes likewise occupied by the forces of the East India Company – may have accounted for why the Burmese were not all that keen to engage in further diplomatic negotiations with a representative of the same European power that had robbed them of theirs; though Crawfurd remained silent on that possibility.

Upon his arrival at the court of King Bagyidaw, Crawfurd remarked that the rites and rituals of the court were tiresome,[57] and he was happy to play

54 Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy... Ava*, 13.
55 Ibid., 17.
56 Ibid., 19.
57 Ibid., 130.

the gadfly when he steadfastly refused to perform any gesture of obeisance to anyone save the king himself.[58] Crawfurd was curt in his dealings with the courtiers: He made it clear that 'if any attempt was made to dictate to us' any matters related to court protocol, then he and the entire delegation would immediately up stakes and leave.[59]

The high point of Crawfurd's visit was, expectedly, his meeting with King Bagyidaw himself – to whom he devoted nine pages in his lengthy and detailed description.[60] In the lead-up to the royal audience Crawfurd had consistently presented the Burmese in disparaging terms. His first description of the king did not veer from the norm he had set, and the ruler of the kingdom is compared somewhat unfavourably to a menial Indian servant:

> The King made his appearance in about ten minutes. His approach was announced by the sound of music, shortly after which a sliding door behind the throne opened with a quick and sharp noise. He mounted a flight of steps which led to the throne from behind with apparent difficulty, as if tottering under the load of dress and ornaments on his person. His dress consisted of a tunic of gold tissue, ornamented with jewels. The crown was a helmet with a high peak, in form not unlike the spire of a Burman pagoda, which it was probably intended to resemble. I was told that it was of entire gold, and it had all the appearance of being studded with abundance of rubies and sapphires. In his right hand his Majesty held what in India is called a Chowrie, which, as far as we could see, was a white tail of the Thibet cow. It is one of the five established ensigns of Burman royalty, the other four being a certain ornament for the forehead, a sword of particular form, a certain description of shoes, and the white umbrella. *His Majesty used the flapper with much adroitness and industry; and it occurred to us, who had never seen such an implement but in the hands of a menial, not with much dignity.* (Emphasis mine)[61]

Crawfurd's Anglo-centrism and India-centrism were both evident here: His *Journal* was, after all, dedicated to none other than King George IV, and here he was describing the monarch of a foreign land to his own. That Crawfurd described King Bagyidaw's fly whisk in terms that were Anglo-Indian ('what in India is called a Chowrie') and states that only a menial servant would

58 Ibid., 129-130.
59 Ibid., 132.
60 Ibid., 133-141.
61 Ibid., 133-134.

carry such a thing in the India that he was familiar with also locates Burma yet again in the wider orbit of the Anglo-Indian empire.

The portrait that Crawfurd drew of King Bagyidaw and the queen was an elaborate one, and it encompassed all aspects of the royal couple: The king was described as short in stature 'but of active form', and his manners were lively and affable 'but his affability often degenerates into familiarity, and this not unfrequently of a ludicrous description'.[62] The queen, on the other hand, Crawfurd described as 'austere and haughty', and in matters pecuniary was 'frugal and parsimonious'.[63] Though even a cursory reading of Crawfurd's *Journal* would convince any reader that he was not about to do the ruler of Burma any favours in his description of him, Crawfurd's credibility as a narrator was pushed a tad too far when he opined about King Bagyidaw's inner state of mind and character: 'The King's natural disposition', Crawfurd contended, 'is admitted to be kind and benevolent, and, considering the temptations by which he is surrounded, he has certainly been guilty of few excesses. In point of talents, he is greatly inferior to his predecessor, and indeed, most of the princes of the house of Alompra. His perception is indeed sufficiently quick, but his curiosity, which is restless, is too easily gratified. With an easy temper, and *with too little firmness or strength of mind to think or act for himself, he is readily led by the ruling favourite of the time*' (emphasis mine).[64]

Just how Crawfurd was able to glean this rare insight into the workings of King Bagyidaw's mind was never elaborated upon by the author himself, though that did not give him cause to pause in his literary barrage. It was – and remains – rather obvious that Crawfurd was interested in solidifying his own case against the ruler, and the caricature of Bagyidaw that he drew was more useful as an instrumental fiction that dovetailed the narrative of Burma as a kingdom in retreat and decline. Burma was, for Crawfurd, a fallen kingdom that had yet to concede that it would eventually come under the domination of the British-Indian empire. Pressing the point further, Crawfurd asserted that the *entire* court was painfully aware of their defeated status though ashamed to admit it, and that the ceremonies of the court were little more than a show that bordered on a pantomime:

> 'The conviction of their defeat and their humiliation was, I may safely say, universal among the Burmans of every rank – it was obvious in their

62 Ibid., 139.
63 Ibid., 141-142.
64 Ibid., 140.

> demeanour and their apprehensions; yet so excessive was the vanity of the Court, that it was gratified, or at least its pride was soothed, by getting up a show, which must have appeared, even to itself, little better than a farce.'[65]

Crawfurd's condescension towards the ruler of Burma, however, was hardly novel: Snodgrass (1826) had set the tone earlier in his work when he invited his fellow countrymen to chortle at the 'harmless vanity and arrogant imbecility' of the ruler whose armies had been soundly routed by the troops of the East India Company and the British navy.[66] In the hands of Crawfurd, the same king was re-fashioned in the likeness of a mawkish court jester: overdressed and weighed down by his finery as well as the pomp and ceremony of his powerless court. And to rub salt into the wound, Crawfurd then compared the court of Ava to that of Siam's, the latter of which he regarded as more dignified and befitting of the 'wild despotism of an Eastern monarch'.[67]

7.d Now on to the *Real* Intelligence: Crawfurd's Data-Gathering Mission

> Colonial knowledge both enabled conquest and was produced by it; in certain important ways, knowledge was what colonialism was all about.[68]
>
> – Nicholas B. Dirks (1996)

Crawfurd's relentless assault on the standing of Burma and its king was just one aspect of his *Journal*. Though diminishing the prestige of King Bagyidaw may have been one of his objectives, it has to be remembered that

65 Ibid., 135.

66 Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, 298.

67 Crawfurd noted that the 'spectacle [of the court of Ava], was upon the whole, sufficiently imposing. Yet, notwithstanding the better taste of the Palace, and the superior dresses of the Burman courtiers (for those in Siam, whom I witnessed, did not appear in their dresses of ceremony), the pageant was less calculated to affect the imagination than that exhibited by the Court of Siam, where the demeanour of the courtiers was more constrained, the crowd of suppliants more numerous, and the manner of the Sovereign himself unquestionably more imposing – authoritative and dignified. The Siamese Court, in short, seemed more consonant to our preconceived notions of the pride, the barbaric magnificence, and wild despotism of the Eastern monarch' (Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy... Ava*, 139).

68 Dirks, 'Foreword', ix.

Crawfurd had been sent to the court of Ava by the Anglo-Indian government and the company for other reasons, too, including finalising the terms of the Treaty of Yandabo between the two countries. Like John Anderson, the company man whose jaunt through Sumatra was intended to furnish the East India Company with vital economic intelligence, Crawfurd was likewise a company man who was keenly aware of the economic potential of Burma. In his account of the journey to Ava, he recounted the discoveries that were made along the journey: Dr Wallich had chanced upon a fossil bone that excited much curiosity – though it was admittedly worthless as far as the East India Company was concerned.[69]

Crawfurd was, however, more excited by the discovery of petroleum wells near the village of Re-nan K'hyaung,[70] and he devoted a substantial part of his second chapter to the subject.[71] Having observed that this petroleum was easily obtained from open wells, and that it was used in almost every household along the Irrawaddy Delta, Crawfurd concluded that 'if it were practicable to ascertain the real quantity produced at the wells, we should be possessed of the means of making a tolerable estimate of the inhabitants who use this commodity, constituting the larger part of the population of the kingdom'.[72]

Estimating the population of Burma was part and parcel of the broader enterprise of the East India Company in the kingdom, for it was clear to all parties concerned that the company was not about to rest after it had secured control of the kingdom's coastline. In time, British power would push deeper inland, up the Irrawaddy Delta and on to the royal capital itself. For functionaries of the company and the Anglo-Indian government

69 Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy... Ava*, 53.

70 Ibid., 52-56.

71 Crawfurd noted that 'the petroleum itself, when first taken out of the well, is of a thin watery consistence, but thickens by keeping, and in the cold weather it coagulates. The wells are worked by the simplest contrivance imaginable'. He also noted that this petroleum was much sought after by the Burmese themselves, who used it in their daily lives for all manner of ends: 'Petroleum is used by the Burmans for the purpose of burning in lamps; and smearing timber, to protect it against insects, especially the white ant, which will not approach it. It is said that about two-thirds of it is used for burning; and that its consumption was universal, until its price reach that of sesamum oil, the only one that is used in the country for burning. Its consumption, therefore, is universal wherever there is water-carriage to convey it; that is, in all the country that is watered by the Irawadi, its tributary streams, and its branches. It includes Bassien, but it excludes Martaban, Tavoy and Mergui, Aracan, Tongo and all the northern and southern tributary states. The quantity exported to foreign parts is a trifle, not worth noticing. It is considered that the consumption of thirty viss per annum for each family of five and a half persons is a moderate average' (ibid., 55).

72 Ibid., 55.

such as Crawfurd, knowledge of the levels of domestic production and consumption was vital in order to estimate the strength and resilience of the kingdom they were about to conquer; and like Anderson whose penchant for number-crunching earned him kudos from the company's board of directors, Crawfurd also came into his own when he set about to estimate the true volume and worth of petroleum that was produced and consumed by the Burmese. As he noted:

> According to the Burmese whom I consulted, the average burden of the vessels employed in the traffic [of petrol] was considered to be about four thousand viss. The number now mentioned is not considered unusual; and it has been reckoned that, one with another, they complete their cargoes in fifteen days; and the exportation of oil, according to this estimate, will be 17,568,000 viss. Deducting a third from this amount the quantity estimated to be used for other purposes than burning, we have at the annual consumption of thirty viss, for a family of five and a half individuals, a population of 2,417,200.[73]

Notwithstanding the quaintly peculiar notion of 'half an individual' that appears in his calculation, – Crawfurd had earlier described Burma as a 'half-civilisation'[74] – Crawfurd certainly did not carry out his work by halves. The Burmese he regarded as 'unreliable' and the kingdom did not have any records that he could consult; and he was forced to attempt an estimate of the population of Burma by his own devices. The numbers grow progressively inflated as his calculation plods along, and by his own estimation – based on the account of another Englishman, Captain Cox – the population of the Ava could have been as high as 6,959,331.[75] Numbers mattered to Crawfurd – indeed, he seemed obsessed by them[76] – be they numbers related to profit and loss, or the numbers of natives who would have to be eventually defeated and pacified.

73 Ibid., 56.

74 Ibid., 13.

75 Ibid., 56-57.

76 Crawfurd constantly returns to the subject of numbers and calculations throughout his narrative. After the delegation had arrived in Ava, he recalculated the actual distance travelled from Rangoon in the following way: 'The distance [from Rangoon to Ava], according to Colonel Wood's map, is four hundred and forty-six miles. According to the vessel's [*Diana's*] log, we ran for two hundred and sixteen hours; and taking our average rate of going at five and a-half knots, with an allowance of three knots an hour for the current, the actual distance travelled will have been five hundred and forty miles' (ibid., 89).

Crawfurd's – and the company's – desire to know more about the land, people, resources and commodities of Burma was a data-gathering enterprise that was simultaneously linked to the related project of territorial expansion and control; and the more he learned about the Burmese the closer that goal of conquest and eventual colonisation drew. The knowledge that Crawfurd sought and built was comprehensive in its scope. The reader will note the similarities in style and structure that are found in the works of Crawfurd, Raffles, Anderson, Keppel and Mundy. To *know* Burma was to know it *completely*; to adopt a panoptic view of the land and its people that would in turn present the coloniser's eye with numbers, statistics and raw data that could be fitted together in a vast map of knowledge of the land before him. And as this was an instance of data-gathering and information-mapping of the highest order, it is not surprising that Crawfurd's work – like Raffles', Anderson's, Mundy's and Keppel's – came with a map.

7.e Locating Tyranny: Crawfurd's Mapping of Burma

Crawfurd's work included two extraordinary maps: One of the environs of Ava and its fortifications and one of the Burmese kingdom and its dominions, the latter of which was done by John Walker – who was also responsible for the map that appeared with Raffles *History of Java* that Crawfurd had expressed his admiration for.

The plan of Ava and its fortifications is found at the beginning of chapter 11, and was based on the survey that was done by Lieutenant de Montmorency, who was a member of Crawfurd's delegation.[77] Montmorency's plan featured the general layout of the city of Ava, pin-pointing the precise locations of the powder magazine, the king's council chamber, the Hall of Justice and the elephant pens. Crucially, it identified the location of the nineteen main gates that allowed access into the walled city, and even included a cross-section view of the outer walls of the fort.

Bearing in mind that Ava was then the seat of power of a kingdom that was recently at war with Britain, the plan of the city that Crawfurd included in his *Journal* would have been of obvious interest to anyone who intended to invade the city and breach its walls. Crawfurd's interest in Ava's defences makes sense when we recall that he had taken part in siege operations before, and was present at the attack of the walled palace complex of Jogjakarta in 1812. When he described the weaknesses of Ava's walls and defences

77 Ibid., 312.

and pin-pointed where they were, he was presumably not doing so for the benefit of the Burmese public works department. This was hardly a tourist map intended for use by those who may have wanted to take a leisurely stroll along the pretty banks of the Irrawaddy. With the river, canals and roads in and out of Ava clearly laid out, Crawfurd-Montmorency's plan of the city was akin to an invasion map; and the lengthy description of the city's ruddy walls and tatterdemalion breastworks left the reader with little doubt as to where Crawfurd and Lieutenant Montmorency's interests actually lay.[78] Later in his work Crawfurd offered an equally detailed account of Rangoon and likewise paid close attention to its defences.[79]

78 The lengthy description of the defences of Ava deserves to be quoted in full here. Crawfurd was less interested in the beauty spots that were on offer in the city, and more in its walls and fortifications. Drawing from the report by Lieutenant Montmorency, he wrote: 'The city of Ava is surrounded by a brick wall fifteen and a-half feet in height, and ten feet in thickness; on the inside of which there is thrown up a bank of earth forming an angle of forty-five degrees; on the top of this bank there is a *terre pleine*, in some places, of a good breadth, but in some others, so narrow as to scarcely admit the recoil of a gun. The parapet of the brickwork is four and a-half feet in height, and two in thickness, measured across a superior slope. There are innumerable embrasures at about a distance of five feet from one another, the cheeks of which are formed in such a way as to prevent anything but a direct fire. On the Irawadi [Irrawaddy] face there is scarcely one flank defence. The wall of the outer town is miserably built, and is continually requiring repair, no doubt chiefly from the pressure of the earth thrown up inside. The ditch around the outer wall is also inconsiderable, and during the dry season fordable at every part. The South and West faces of the town are defended by a deep and rapid torrent, called the Myit-tha, leading from the Myit-nge. This is not fordable, for the banks are very steep; and even when crossed, the swamp and the jungle from the West face, between it and the town, with the extensive plain of culture to the South, are formidable obstructions. There is a good road, however, on the banks of this brook all the way up, as well as the banks of the Irawadi towards the North-West angle. The approach to the South-West angle is well defended, the wall there being constructed *en cremalliere*. The Myit-nge on the East face forms a considerable part of the defences on that side. This river, about one hundred and fifty yards broad, is a fine rapid stream, and the banks of it very steep and high; the river not running in such a manner as to form any part of the defence of the South-East angle of the city' (ibid., 314-315). Crawfurd's description of Ava was basically an account of its defensive capabilities, pinpointing the safest routes and approaches for an attack.

79 Crawfurd's description of Rangoon was based on accounts that had been given to him while he was in charge of Pegu. He noted that Rangoon 'is situated about twenty-six miles from the sea, on the eastern branch of the Irawadi [Irrawaddy], five miles below the junction of the Lain and Panlang rivers, and about two miles above the Syrian river. It lies on the left bank, and on a reach which runs nearly due East and West. The town and suburbs extend about a mile along the bank of the river, and are in depth about three-quarters of a mile; but the houses are unequally scattered around this area. The fort, or stockade, is an irregular square; the North and South faces of which were found to measure 1145 yards; the East 598; and the West 197 yards. On the North face there are two sally-ports; on the South two gates and three sally-ports; on the East two gates; and on the West one gate and one sally-port. The stockade is fourteen feet high, and

Even more impressive than the plan of Ava was the map of Burma by John Walker, who, as we have seen earlier, was one of the most accomplished map-makers at the time and who was known for the amount of detail that went into his work: The Raffles-Walker map (1817) had included more than 365 five towns, cities, ports and temples; along with more than a 150 rivers and streams that criss-crossed the island of Java. Walker's map of Burma was as precise and detailed as the one he produced for Raffles, though it did not feature a clear boundary between British India and the Kingdom of Burma. To the left of the map was the province of Bengal, with Calcutta clearly identified along the banks of the Hoogly. Tipperah, Chittagong, Munipore (Manipur), Aracan (Arakan), Pegu, Bassien and Martaban are clearly identified, along with the major towns and cities that were found there. But it is clear that the main focus of the map was none other than the Irrawaddy Delta itself, with Rangoon, Pegu, Pugan (Pagan) and the royal city of Ava as the focal points of interest.

Taxing to the eye of the reader, the map is crammed with information: In the Lower Irrawaddy region Walker identified more than eighty towns and cities. Upriver from Shue Kyen, there are more than eighty other towns and cities before one reaches Pagan. From Pagan northwards Walker adds another fifty-plus towns along the Kyen Dwen River and its tributaries; while to the northeast as the Irrawaddy snakes past Ava in the direction of Yunan the reader's eye passes by a further forty-plus localities. As far as its strategic value was concerned, the Crawfurd-Walker map would have been useful for anyone planning either a landward or seaward approach to the centre of the kingdom, as it identified the impassable highlands and mountain ranges of Tipperah and Chittagong, pointing to the lowland valley areas along the Munnoo, Fenny and Chigree Rivers. With the Irrawaddy clearly mapped out along with the main artery roads of the kingdom, the

is composed of heavy beams of teak timber. It has at some places a stage to fire musketry from, in the parapet over which are a kind of embrasures, or loop-holes. On the South side there is a miserable ditch, and in one situation a deep swamp, both overgrown with *Arums*, *Pontiderias*, the *Pitsia Stratiota*, and other aquatic plants' (ibid., 345-346). Crawfurd obviously saw the commercial advantages that Rangoon had to offer as well, and he noted that it was ideally located for ship-building as it was close to the sea as well as to sources of teak wood. Later, he noted that 'the distance of the principal teak forests is at the same time comparatively inconsiderable, and there is a water conveyance for the timber nearly the whole way [to Rangoon]. Ship-building has in fact been conducted at Rangoon since the year 1786, and in the thirty-eight years that preceded our capture of it, there had been built one hundred and eleven square-rigged vessels of European construction, the total burthens of which amounted to above 35,000 tonnes. Several of these were of from 800 to 1000 tonnes burthen. Under the direction of European masters, the Burmese were found to make dexterous and laborious artisans' (ibid., 349).

reader is left with an Ava that was denuded and exposed, awaiting penetration – be it in military or economic terms.

The only difference between the Crawfurd-Walker map and the Raffles-Walker map is that Crawfurd did not have his own presence marked anywhere on the chart. Unlike Raffles, who had his footprints impressed all over the landscape of Java, Crawfurd left no traces behind him, and nowhere on the map do we detect the route that the *Diana* had taken as it brought the Scotsman and his companions closer to the court of King Bagyidaw. Crawfurd may have been disinclined to leave any lasting impression of himself in his account of Burma, but there were other features of his work that probably did leave a lasting impression of Burma upon the reader.

7.f From Land of Tyranny to Theatre of the Grotesque

The final observation that can be made about Crawfurd's *Journal* is how it departs in slant and focus from his previous works on the Southeast Asian archipelago, Siam and Cochinchina. Though Crawfurd was meticulous as ever in his accounting of the land, people, resources and history of Burma, his *Journal to Ava* included references and vignettes that had hitherto never been among his range of concerns.

The frontispiece of Crawfurd's *Journal* featured a full-page coloured lithograph of a Burmese elephant, though the pachyderm in question was not of the ordinary garden variety, but rather an albino that was regarded as one of the sacred icons of the Kingdom of Ava. Thus the very first image that greets the eye of the reader was one that set the standard for the other illustrations that followed. In his earlier works on the Indian Archipelago, Siam and Cochinchina, Crawfurd had included illustrations of a more humdrum nature: His *History of the Indian Archipelago* featured a chromolithograph plate with two natives, posed and presented as native archetypes. Likewise in his account of his journey to Siam and Cochinchina there were six monochrome lithograph plates that featured ordinary ethnic native types – a Malay man and a Malay woman, a Siamese man and a Siamese woman, a Mandarin of the civil order and a Mandarin of the military order[80] – all of whom were presented in an ordinary aspect; the images being somewhat uninteresting though accurate, akin to Marryat's pictorial gallery of pirates and rogues of the Borneo coast.

80 The six monochrome lithographs were all done by E. Reid and published by Henry Colburn of London, 1828.

Many of the images in Crawfurd's *Journal to Ava* were coloured – in keeping with the development of chromolithography at the time – though the subjects chosen more exotic. Between pages 184 and 185 was inserted a close-up portrait of a blue-faced woman of the Kyen (Kayan) tribe. But even more arresting was the image to the left, which was that of a *Profile of a Man Covered with Hair*. Crawfurd had chanced upon the famous 'hairy family of Burma' who would later amaze, shock and repulse the genteel readers of London society. Between pages 186 and 187 was the full page coloured illustration of Shwe-Maong and his daughter Maphoon, whose appearance was anything but ordinary. Bondeson has recounted the life-story of Shwe-Maong and his descendants who had been given to King Bagyidaw as a child and who lived out the rest of his life as the court buffoon.[81]

That Crawfurd had chosen to feature blue-faced natives and the 'hairy family' of Burma in his work was somewhat surprising considering how his writing had hitherto been of a drier, matter-of-fact nature. Though portraits and full-figure engravings of 'native types' had grown popular and commonplace in the writings of nineteenth-century Western travellers and colonial functionaries, Crawfurd's choice of subjects for his *Journal to Ava* were arresting to say the least. When we place these images in the wider context of the work as a whole; a work that had depicted Burma as 'half-civilised', 'savage', 'barbaric' and 'tranquil without animation', they do correspond to the larger theme that he had set from the beginning. Bastin's[82] observation of Raffles' work on Java as colonial propaganda can be equally applied to Crawfurd's work on Burma: Crammed though these works were with facts, data, statistics and maps, neither could be said to

81 Shwe-Maong had been gifted to the king of Burma at the age of five, and he had spent the rest of his life as an entertainer at the court of Ava. Later, the king presented him with a wife chosen from the king's collection of beautiful women, and from this marital union four children would be born. Two of them would die young, and one of them would inherit the physical characteristics of her father, Maphoon. Shwe-Maong would later die tragically in a robbery incident, but his daughter Maphoon would remain as a favourite at the court. She was later married to a Burmese man who accepted the king's reward, and had several children with him. Maphoon's son Maung-Phoset would inherit the same physical features of his mother and grandfather. During the Third Anglo-Burmese War the family was forced to flee from the palace at Mandalay when it was attacked by British troops in 1885. Maphoon and Maung-Phoset were later rescued by an Italian – Captain Paperno – and were eventually taken on tour across Europe after the defeat of King Thibaw and the end of the last Burmese dynasty. Bondeson notes that in Europe the family was the object of public amusement and curiosity, and they toured London and Paris as curiosities for freak shows as well as subjects of genuine scientific research (Bondeson, *Freaks*, 29-35).

82 Bastin, 'Foreword', vii.

be impartial or objective.[83] If Raffles had consigned Java to the museum of empire, then Crawfurd had consigned Burma to the junk heap of history; as a nation defeated and on the decline as a result of the tyranny of custom and feudal power.

7.g And Thus Was Burma *Known*: Tyrants, Freaks and the Epistemic Arrest of Burma

Far from being the 'still land' that was 'without animation',[84] Burma in the 1820s was hardly a land asleep. By the time that Crawfurd had arrived at the Court of Ava panic had set in,[85] and the kingdom was painfully aware that it was facing a real existential threat in the form of the expanding Anglo-Indian empire.

Crawfurd's frustration with the Burmese was partly the result of this angst and excitement, as the Burmese did everything they could to halt the advance of the power encroaching upon their borders. Steinberg has noted that Crawfurd's mission to Ava was in reality a failure for the only concession given to him by King Bagyidaw 'was a vague and meaningless commercial treaty'.[86] Crawfurd himself had never entertained the notion that British-Burmese relations would or could be on an equal footing, and his no-compromise, no-surrender stance was made clear by himself in his work.[87] The future British Resident appointed to the court of Ava – Major

83 Chapters 14 and 15 of the *Journal* focused on the dress, customs, manners, religion and language of the Burmese and the other ethnic groups of Burma.

84 Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy... Ava*, 127.

85 The apprehension of the Burmese towards the British was something that Crawfurd himself observed, and he noted that 'the appearance of a British Mission at Ava, although specifically provided for by the Treaty of Peace, had excited a good deal of uneasiness on the part of the Court, and much alarm among the people. Our little party of less than thirty Europeans had been magnified by rumour into some hundreds, and from such a force the capital itself was scarcely thought to be safe – so deep an impression had the superiority of European arms produced upon the nation at large!' (ibid., 97). Later, Crawfurd was to add that 'the apprehension entertained by the Burmans of our power has, in all likelihood, give rise to the prophesies amongst them, that their country is to be conquered by a race of white men' (ibid., 514).

86 Steinberg, *In Search of Southeast Asia*, 'Burma 1752-1878', 105.

87 By the end of his work Crawfurd stated his own position unequivocally when he noted that Britain should never surrender whatever advantages it had over the Kingdom of Ava: 'With respect to our political relations with Burma, I may add, that perhaps the best means of consolidating them would have been the retention of the port of Rangoon, and a trifling territory surrounding it, a position well secured by its military strength.' (Crawfurd's suggestion that Britain retain Rangoon after the First Anglo-Burmese War was, however, rejected.)

Henry Burney – was able to smooth relations between the two powers momentarily between 1830 to 1833, but Britain's refusal to give up Tenasserim eventually led to conflict between the two nations, and Burma would be on the losing side again.

The waning of Burma's power was partly the result of its proximity to British India and Britain's desire to drag the kingdom closer to its Indian empire. At the same time Siam's position meant that it would become a buffer state between the ever-expanding spheres of British and French influence, giving the kingdom the breathing space it needed and allowing it to regain some of the power and prestige that it once had. In 1835 Siam was even strong enough to mount an attack on Cochinchina, and its forces besieged the walls of Hanoi.[88]

No such opportunity was ever afforded to Burma, however. King Bagyidaw would later be deposed by King Tharrawaddy, and the latter would up the stakes in the contest between Burma and Britain. The accession of King Pagan Min (in 1846) and then Mindon (1852) did little to alter the balance of power between Burma and its powerful rival, though Burma had by then begun a process of military reform and had even acquired a Western-style ten-gun man-of-war that was part of its fleet.[89] Following the Second Anglo-Burmese War of 1852, Rangoon and the lower Irrawaddy Delta were taken by Britain, forcing the Burmese kingdom to retreat further north to Mandalay – which proved to be disastrous as it meant that the Burmese king had lost his main source of revenue, which came from the rice-growing fertile lands of the delta.[90] Cut off from the coast and surrounded by hostile highlands and mountains, the Burmese kingdom was no longer able to pay for the modernisation of its state apparatus and army.

He then added that 'the benefits which would have been accrued from this measure would have been great. It would have exonerated us from our too extensive territorial acquisitions from the Burmese government – settled our pecuniary claims on the Court of Ava – placed us in a commanding military attitude, which would have relieved us from all apprehension of annoyance from the power of the Burmese – given us command of the navigation of the Irawadi [Irrawaddy], and possession *of a port, which, in a commercial and military view, is probably, under the circumstances, the most convenient and useful in the Indian Seas*' (Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy… Ava*, 371; emphasis mine).

88 'Siam-Cochinchina War', 4.

89 During the naval attack on Rangoon at the outset of the Second Anglo-Burmese War, the Burmese man-of-war was intercepted and captured by the British warship *HMS Hermes*. It was the most modern vessel in the Burmese navy then, as compared to the other Burmese warships that were traditional in design and powered by oarsmen ('The War in Burmah', 409).

90 Steinberg, *In Search of Southeast Asia*, 'Burma 1752-1878', 108.

Following the second defeat of the Burmese in 1852, successive Burmese rulers tried to negotiate with other European powers in order to counter the looming threat of Britain. King Mindon had sent an emissary to meet Queen Victoria to plead the case of his kingdom, but the meeting was interrupted by the presence of the British Secretary of State for India, implying that Burma was little more than a vassal state of the British Indian government.[91] France and Italy were approached for help, but neither were willing to come to Burma's defence for fear of sparking an intra-European conflict as a result.

The final blow came with the Third Anglo-Burmese War of 1885, which led to the surrender (and eventual exile) of King Thibaw and the forceful annexation of Upper Burma on 1 January 1886, ending the Konbaung dynasty for good.[92] By then the image of the rulers of Burma was decidedly negative in the popular Western imaginary, bordering on the racist and grotesque. In the Western press King Thibaw was cast as a bloodthirsty tyrant who sacrificed innocents for the sake of his own health and safety,[93] and his defeat at the hands of the British was depicted in a cartoon carried by *Punch* with the Burmese ruler in the form of a toad, labelled 'Theebaw the Burmese Toad'[94], booted by a British soldier from the rear. Insult followed insult, and the royal palace of Mandalay was sacked by British troops who looted its contents and carried out mass executions of those they labelled rebels, a repeat of the fate that had befallen the palace of Jogjakarta in 1812. Though the history of independent Burma came to its graceless end in 1886, Steinberg was probably right when he noted that 'the fate of Burma was actually sealed by the First Anglo-Burmese War' six decades earlier.[95]

Burma would finally become a British colony, governed from India and according to administrative norms that had been developed in the Indian colony earlier.[96] Over the coming decades 'the map of Southeast Asia was

91 Ibid., 'The Making of New States', 181.

92 Ibid., 'The Making of New States', 182-183.

93 By the 1880s the news reports that came from Burma had grown more lurid and grisly in form and content. In 1880 the *St Louis Globe-Democrat* featured a headline story – taken from British sources – that 700 innocent civilians, including foreigners, had been buried alive in Mandalay in an obscure ritual that was intended to ensure the health and safety of King Thibaw who was said to be ill ('Buried, Not Burned', p. 3).

94 'Theebaw the Burmese Toad', 215.

95 Steinberg, *In Search of Southeast Asia*, 'Burma 1752-1878', 110.

96 Steinberg notes that the administrative and economic systems of British Burma 'developed in the shadow of British Indian practices and were justified in the name of nineteenth-century liberalism' (ibid., 180). Each region of the British Burman colony was first made a division of the colonial government in India, and in 1862 these were brought together under a chief commissioner based in Rangoon. Up to World War I, British Burma was treated and governed

redrawn to conform with the emerging world political order',[97] and that was an order that was determined and defined by the logic of racialised colonial-capitalism more than anything else. The epistemologies, histories and geographies of the defeated nations of Southeast Asia would be rendered null and void; deemed exotic, quaint and unscientific; and consigned to the museum of empire or the freak-shows of the colonial metropole. Crawfurd's *Journal* was one of the first works that contributed to the distortion and marginalisation of the native Burmese voice.

Though his mission to the court of Ava may have been unsuccessful, the pen of Crawfurd proved to be more damaging and lasting. The Burma that the reader is left with is one that was overshadowed by India, dulled by tyranny and rendered exotic thanks to the freaks who lived within its borders. This was, admittedly, *Crawfurd*'s Burma – but that did not render it any less useful as a morsel of instrumental knowledge, for it was a Burma that was shared by the company he kept and the company he served.

as an extension of British India, and during this period the colony witnessed the arrival of large numbers of migrant workers and traders from the Indian subcontinent who were encouraged to relocate to Burma to help develop its economy. The long-term legacy of this policy was the generation of feelings of hostility and suspicion between the ethnic groups in Burma, directed towards Indian migrants in particular who were seen by the Burmese as collaborators in the British colonial enterprise. Unsurprisingly, when Burman-Buddhist nationalism began to emerge by the 1930s, among the first groups targeted by the Burman nationalists were the Indian migrants who were regarded as tools of the British Empire.

97 Steinberg, *In Search of Southeast Asia*, 'The Making of New States', 175.

8 Bricolage, Power and How a Region Was Discursively Constructed

The historian observes, that Empires are won by portions.
– *The Times* (London), 12 September 1818

8.a Books in the Era of Gunboat Epistemology

Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.[1]
– Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 'The Danger of a Single Story' (2009)

Today we live in a globalised world that has been brought together via the communicative architecture that connects every part of the world and which has collapsed time and space. Astounding though these advances may seem to some, they have also been accompanied by the less pleasant phenomenon of the bad tourist who really does not know how to travel; and who perhaps should never have left home in the first place. We see the likes of them everywhere these days, from spoilt children who complain that there are no french fries on the menu in Java to middle-aged travellers who eat, love and pray their way across Asia in search of its exotic essence – which they read about in their bathtubs back home.

This book has been about another sort of traveller, one who perhaps never really travelled at all. It has been a book about the imagining, configuring, mapping and defining of this thing and place called Southeast Asia by a generation of men who lived in, and were the products of, the nineteenth century. None of them were tourists, though for some of them their jaunt across Southeast Asia would prove adventurous, sometimes even violent. We have looked closely at their writings – the works of Raffles, Crawfurd, Brooke, Anderson, Snodgrass, Keppel, Mundy and Marryat, as well as de Bry, Raleigh and Nieuhof who wrote before them – and argued that in all these cases what we find is not a Southeast Asia that is discovered and represented through accurate mimesis, but rather an *imagining* of Southeast Asia that took off in the boardrooms of companies thousands of miles away, where the *idea* of Southeast Asia and its constituent polities was

1 Adichie, 'The Danger of a Single Story'.

first concocted in that military-commercial laboratory where Southeast Asia – and Asia by extension – was forged by the combined wills of empire, colonialism and racialised capitalism, with all the attendant sciences and pseudo-sciences present. Like Graham Greene's *Quiet American* Alden Pyle, who was convinced that he *knew* Southeast Asia because he had read about it in the work of his mentor York Harding, the men whose writings we have looked at in this work were likewise sure that he had discovered a part of the world hitherto unknown, and that they had come to *know* it and rendered it *knowable*. That they were blind to the workings of power and economic interest in their own subjective portrayals of the thing-in-itself confirms their respective subject-positions as agents of the structure of power they were part of.

The fact that their writings were documents of power had less to do with the writers themselves, for as individuals taken out of the context of their work and time they would have been inconsequential. Raffles or Crawfurd alone would have been nothing without the support of the company they worked for, for it was the East India Company – with its economic clout and military capabilities – that translated the observations and policy recommendations of these men into reality. They were men who lived in the age of empire, and the creatures of colonial-capitalism. But try as they might to create and impose the panoptic gaze of empire over their dominions, they never escaped the solipsistic confines of the Eurocentric gaze themselves. That gaze in turn was myopic and inward-looking, as were the epistemic claims that issued forth from it. Having travelled so far to discover and come to know the *Other*, such men often confronted their own bias and prejudices – having never left home in the first place. And though their power was real, and oftentimes brutal and repressive, it was a power that sought to subdue an imaginary from within. Western imperialism and colonialism never really *knew* the *Other*, partly because it hardly regarded and interrogated itself and its own inner workings.

A century does not *'do'* anything; though quite a lot of things can get done in the space of a century. The nineteenth century – which has been the main framework of this book – was a century where quite a lot of things were done *in* Southeast Asia and *about* Southeast Asia; some of them downright repugnant and reprehensible. And it was in the course of the nineteenth century that the *idea* of Southeast Asia came to be framed in the terms that we recognise it today. Time passed, and what were initially reports and surveys that were written for the company and government that these men served came to be seen and read as *studies*, that were later elevated to an almost canonical status in the discipline of Southeast Asian area

studies[2] – though perhaps they were never intended to be regarded so by the authors themselves.

In the decades that followed, the idea of Southeast Asia as a region with a distinct character of its own would slowly emerge, developed as it was by a host of other writers, explorers and colonial functionaries. Though at the initial stages of this contact between East and West all of the actors concerned were men, the arrival of Western women to Southeast Asia – after it had been mapped and known – did not occasion a radical shift in the meta-narrative that defined the region as savage, backward and exotic. Just as the region was the stage for the reinvention of men like Raffles and Brooke, it served as the backdrop for the reinvention of a new Western femininity that juxtaposed itself against the trope of the exotic Asian woman. As we have argued elsewhere, to travel under the auspices of empire in the nineteenth century meant that there were never innocents abroad, and there was rarely innocent knowledge of the Other either.[3]

The region that is now known as Southeast Asia was written about at length by numerous traveller-authors who made various claims of knowledge about the place and its people, and in the process they had also attempted to *locate* it. After Wallace it was Albert S. Bickmore who placed the archipelago to the *east* of India, as did W. H. Davenport Adams and later Forbes.[4] But it was Howard Malcolm's work, and later Frank Vincent's that were among the first to specifically name the region *South-Eastern Asia* – albeit keeping it still within the orbit of *Further India*.[5] The mobility of the region, and its ever-shifting boundaries and coordinates, reflected the uncertainty of these writers themselves, and the jury would remain out well into the twentieth century. Hugh Clifford's work that was published in 1904 still referred to Southeast Asia as *Further India*,[6] a viewpoint that could be dated back to the time of Raffles and Crawfurd, and even further back to the time of Ptolemy and Munster. (While, conversely, J.M. Thoburn's missionary tract was entitled *India and Malaysia: Observations of a Methodist Missionary in South Asia* (1893), and utilised the word-name *Malaysia* seven decades before the creation of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963.)

As the nineteenth century progressed, the institutions and agencies that helped to shape it likewise experienced changes of their own. The era of the

2 Bastin, 'Foreword', vii.

3 See Noor, 'Innocents Abroad?' and Noor, 'Commemorer les femmes, obliterer l'Empire'.

4 Bickmore, *Travels in the East Indian Archipelago*; Adams, *The Eastern Archipelago*; Forbes, *A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago*.

5 Malcolm, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia*; Vincent, *The Land of the White Elephant*.

6 Clifford, *Further India*.

militarised company would eventually come to an end – the Compagnie française pour le commerce des Indes orientales was declared bankrupt in 1794, and the Dutch East Indies Company would be defunct by 1799, but the British East India Company would soldier on long after the Indian Revolt of 1857, and would only be shut down in 1874.

By then the logic of racialised colonial-capitalism had set, and had become normalised in the relations between the European colonial powers and their Southeast Asian counterparts. In 1874 – the year that the East India Company breathed its last – the British government had taken over the running of India, Burma and the Straits Settlements and was making tentative probes into the kingdoms of the Malayan Peninsula that would eventually come under its influence. The treaties that were subsequently penned and signed between the British and the Malay sultans and rajahs of Perak, Selangor and Pahang were identical in form and spirit to those that had been forced upon the rulers of India and Burma by the East India Company decades earlier; and they introduced, among other things, the neat division between matters of local custom and the economic management of the states concerned, leaving the former under the care of disempowered native rulers while taking the latter as the main concern of the colonial authorities.[7] In short, wealth and political-military power would fall into

7 The Pangkor Treaty between Britain and the Kingdom of Perak was signed on 20 January 1874 between the British colonial authorities and Sultan Abdullah. Initially, the practicalities of intervention in Malay affairs were ill-conceived and vague. Sir Andrew Clarke, the new governor of the Straits Settlements, was beseeched to undertake the enterprise by the desperate W. H. Read, but it was in fact the invitation from Sultan Abdullah of Perak (in 1874) for Clarke to send a British 'advisor' to help him manage the affairs of his kingdom that set the wheels of intervention in motion. At first, the duties and sphere of authority of the 'advisors' were not clearly identified and specified in any way. After previous debacles such as the Naning War and the Civil War of Pahang, the British government was reluctant to arouse Malay suspicion or revolt. Sultan Abdullah's invitation for a British advisor to be sent to his court was an indirect way of inviting the British to intervene on his behalf in the succession dispute between himself and the two other contenders to the throne: Sultan Ismail and Raja Yusuf. In the short term, Sultan Abdullah managed to win British support, but it was to end in disaster when he decided to renege on the agreements of the Pangkor Treaty. The Pangkor Treaty stipulated that the advice of the British Resident assigned to the Perak court was not to be taken lightly, and the ruler would henceforth have no choice but to follow the advice of the Resident in all matters save those regarding traditional Malay customs and religion. The general administration of the kingdom was also to be regulated under the supervision of the British Resident, as well as the collection of revenues and the control of state finances and expenditure. In this regard, the two most important clauses of the Pangkor Treaty of 1874 were Clauses VI and X, which read: 'VI. That the Sultan receive and provide residence for a British Officer, to be called Resident, who shall be accredited to his court, and whose advice must be asked and acted upon in all questions other than those touching upon Malay religion and custom', and 'X. That the collection and control

the hands of the colonial authorities, leaving the natives with little more than courtly rituals and sumptuary laws.

It was according to the terms of this neat oppositional dichotomy that colonial-native relations would be defined up to World War II. And from the closing decades of the nineteenth century to the 1930s, the colonial imaginary would configure the native Other in terms that had been set earlier: Right up to the sinking of the *HMS Repulse* and the *HMS Prince of Wales* at the outset of World War II, tourist pamphlets and brochures produced by British, Dutch, French and Spanish colonial administrations would invite Western travellers to a Southeast Asia that was populated by pirates, headhunters and all manner of exotic and essentialised natives. Raffles' trope of an antiquated Java would be repeated in the colonial propaganda of the Dutch, as was the image of the topless native beauty and the recurrent bogeyman of the pirate and headhunter that would feature in the pages

of all revenues and the general administration of the country be regulated under the advice of these Residents' (Swettenham, *British Malaya*, 1906. 176-177.) Later, in 1888, the Pahang Treaty between the British and the ruler of Pahang was signed. The terms of the 1888 treaty between Pahang and the British made it abundantly clear that the latter were about to gain command over the territory and economy of the former. Article 1 of the treaty bound Pahang to other British colonies, compelling it to come to their defence when requested to do so. Article 2 of the treaty stated that 'His Highness the Raja of Pahang undertakes if requested by the government of the Straits Settlements to cooperate in making arrangements for facilitating trade and transit communication overland through the state of Pahang with the state of Johore and other neighbouring states', while Article 3 stated that 'If the government of the Straits Settlements shall at any time desire to appoint a British officer as Agent to live within the state of Pahang having functions similar to those of a Consular Officer, His Highness the Raja will be prepared to provide free of cost a suitable site within his territory whereon a residence may be erected for occupation by such officer'. Article 4 stipulated that the currency of the Straits Settlements will be in use in Pahang, and that henceforth the mint of Pahang would not be allowed to produce coinage and other currency without following the limitations set by the government of the Straits Settlements, while Article 5 noted that 'The Governor of the Straits Settlements will at all times to the utmost of his power take whatever steps necessary to protect the government and territory of Pahang from external hostile attacks', and in so doing demanded the same cooperation from the ruler of Pahang. Crucially, Article 6 of the treaty made it clear that 'The Raja of Pahang undertakes on his part that he will not, without the knowledge and consent of Her Majesty's government negotiate any treaty or enter into any engagement with any foreign state', or 'interfere in the politics of administration of any native state'. The same act further added that 'It is further agreed that if occasion should arise for political correspondence between His Highness the Raja and any foreign state, such correspondence shall be conducted through Her Majesty's government, to whom His Highness makes over the guidance and control of his foreign relations'. Article 6 thus effectively robbed Sultan Ahmad and the rulers of Pahang of the right to engage in any diplomatic relations with any other Malay or European kingdom (Great Britain (Foreign Office and Colonial Office), *Treaties and Other Papers Connected with the Native States of the Malay Peninsula*, 42-55).

of comics, pulp fiction and even mildly scintillating soft pornography. In the novels of Joseph Conrad Southeast Asia would serve as the backdrop for the stage of self reinvention, as it did in the works of Hugh Clifford, for whom the landscape and community of Pahang in the Malay Peninsula provided a stark contrast to the model of Western law and governance that he valorised so (see Appendix E). On the lower shelves of popular fiction writers like Nicholas Monsarrat – author of *The Nylon Pirates*, no less – penned novels such as *The White Rajah*, which was rather clearly inspired by the life-story of James Brooke,[8] while the February 1960 issue of the saucy *Male Magazine* featured as its main story the tale of 'Jamie [sic] Brooke: The White Rajah of Sarawak Who Conquered a Dyak Army and Turned All Borneo into His Private Kingdom' – with a racy vignette of half-naked native girls accompanied by the caption 'Keep us warm, Rajah Brooke', the girls begged, 'We are 12 and you are a big man'.[9]

Clichéd though these tropes and stereotypes were, they were not the products of a twentieth-century mindset, but rather the result of a nineteenth-century imaginary that found expression in the books, journals and reports that were written a hundred years before. If Bob Hope and Bing Crosby found themselves excited by Dorothy Lamour's coconuts on the *Road to Singapore* (1940), the idea of Southeast Asia as an exotic space populated by nubile damsels was already old hat by then, an overdetermined idea that had been worked and reworked time and again by successive writers long before the film was even scripted.

This observation, however, occasions a question that has to be raised at this point: If the Western configuration of Southeast Asia as a place that was savage and exotic had become so popular in the Western imaginary, were there no counterfactuals or attempts to resist the hegemonic power of such an idea?

8.b Against the Coloniser's Pen: The Internal Critique of Colonial-Capitalism

It would be erroneous to think that the language-game of nineteenth-century racialised colonial-capitalism was as hegemonic as some have

8 Monsarrat, *The White Rajah*. Monsarrat's novel featured a European pirate-adventurer who would build his own kingdom on the island of Makassang, which was said to be located in the Java Sea.

9 'Jamie [sic] Brooke', 20-25.

made it out to be. It bears repeating that the East India Company was never without its critics; and long before the company made its presence felt in East India and Southeast Asia, even before Francis Light had managed to secure the island of Penang from Sultan Abdullah Shah of Kedah (in 1786) in the name of the company and his king, the company was already making headlines back in England and attracting the sort of publicity that could only be described as scandalous.

Cohn has noted that the East India Company was a thing that was without precedent in British history, and this was all the more so in the case of the colonies that came under its control. Whereas the British colonies in North America were formerly under direct rule from England, the colonies in India and the East Indies were governed by a company that had assumed the powers of a state – something that had never happened before.[10] Equally unprecedented was the scale and magnitude of the company's profits. The British public was astounded by the profits that the company was raking in, and the vast personal fortunes that were amassed by some of its heads that were on public display.[11] For men on the make, or for those with a past to escape from, the East India Company was the ideal vehicle for upward social mobility as well as geographical mobility; the perfect vector that could transport them to a new land where they could begin their lives anew. But it has to be emphasised here that in actual numbers those who joined (and succeeded) in that company were few, and that for a vast majority of other Europeans no such opportunities presented themselves, fuelling resentment and anger.

Some of the strongest criticisms of the company emanated from the House of Commons itself; and it should be noted that it was the British Parliament that passed bill after bill to monitor, control and limit the powers of the East India Company as it operated abroad. On 23 April 1782, the *London Chronicle* reported that the company's affairs were discussed in Parliament, and that MPs were concerned that the company was acting beyond the constraints of the law in its dealings in India. Parliament then resolved 'that it is the duty of the Chairman and the Directors of the East India Company to tranfmit, with all convenient fpeed, and by all fitting ways and means, to India, all acts of Parliament relative to the company's affairs, and the ordering and governing of their fervants with-in the limits

10 Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, 57-62.

11 Dalrymple, 'The East India Company'.

of the Charter; and to take fuch fteps as may be moft conducive towards affecting the purpofes of the legiflature for the relief of the natives."[12]

The company was taken to task by the members of Parliament for abdicating its responsibility towards the Indians who had come under company rule; and this would become a recurring complaint about the conduct of the East India Company for decades to follow. Later the same report noted that the members of Parliament were concerned that the act entitled 'An Act for Eftablishing Certain Regulations for the Better Management of the Affairs of the East India Company' had not been abided by the company's officials in Bengal, 'for the administration of justice in Bengal; and for the relief of certain perfons imprifoned in Calcutta, Bengal',[13] and that as a result of the company's lackadaisical attitude towards the enforcement of laws that had been sanctioned in London the 'provision of relief to individual natives, as well as the people at large, may be fruftrated'.[14]

Parliamentarians from both sides of the political divide found themselves occasionally in agreement when it came to criticising the actions of the East India Company and its functionaries in the East. As we have seen earlier, among them was the ever-vocal William Cobbett, whose lengthy diatribe against the invasion of Java was one of the strongest critiques levelled against the company and men like Lord Minto and Stamford Raffles (see Appendix A).

Cobbett's critique of the company's conduct in Java also revealed his own subject-position as someone who stood radically outside the discursive economy of the East India Company, and who was thus unable, and probably unwilling, to play along with the language-game of racialised colonial-capitalism as it was understood and used then. As we can see in his own tirade against the company's adventure in Java (and the many sustained attacks by him on the company's conduct elsewhere as well), Cobbett was not overly concerned about the economic advantages that Java had to offer, or enamoured by the tales of great abundance and prospect that was imagined by the likes of Raffles. Nor was he impressed by the scholarly pretensions of the captains of colonialism and industry who vaulted their deeds (or rather misdeeds) as attempts to secure the lasting legacy of ancient civilisations lost, then rescued, via colonial intervention.

Throughout his career as a politician and pamphleteer, Cobbett sneered at the pseudo-academic pretensions of those who tried to dress imperialism

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.

in the garb of scholarship and learning, and instead noted only the vast profits that they hauled back to England – some of which ended up in public galleries and museums, but most of which ended up in the drawing rooms and dining halls of the palatial mansions they built for themselves.

Cobbett was not alone in his refusal to play by the language-game of colonial-capitalism: We have also noted the protests against the East India Company and other Western merchant-mercenary-adventurers (such as James Brooke) that emanated from the likes of the British Aborigines' Protection Society, a society formed in 1837 by ardent abolitionists like Thomas Hodgkin and William Allen (see Appendix C). Such organisations were founded on a totally different language-game, and in the case of the Aborigines' Protection Society, the operative language-game that held it together was that of pacifist missionary activism, which regarded the world as the domain of God, and all creatures great and small as part of that same family. If the officials of the company and the commanders of the British army and navy could only see pirates and bandits roaming the seas and lands of Southeast Asia, the missionary movements could only see lost souls who needed to be saved. Equally unimpressed by testimonies of profit and new markets, such movements looked upon Southeast Asia – and the rest of Asia and Africa – as a 'new world' where the word of God could be delivered instead. Brooke, Keppel, Mundy and Marryat may have regarded every Dayak killed as a pirate crossed off the list of enemies, but for the missionary movements every heathen killed was an opportunity for salvation lost forever.

Between the language-game of colonial-capitalism and the language-game of missionary activism there was never a bridge. The final vocabulary of the former was one that rested on the bedrock of profit and loss, markets gained and markets denied. For the latter the final moral vocabulary was one that was founded on an ethics that was derived from revealed knowledge. Though both language-games were articulated through the medium of the same language – English – there was nothing that brought them closer together, and the two discursive economies were worlds apart, in the same way that the language of physics and poetry never speak to each other.

These examples remind us of the simple fact that the language-game of racialised colonial-capitalism was confined to a specific – and relatively small – community of language-users only, and that it was hardly ever as hegemonic as its proponents were wont to claim. In the same way that the language-game of academia today – what we tend to refer to as 'academic writing or discourse' – is confined mainly to a relatively small circle of poorly-dressed professionals in their respective academic enclaves, the

language-game of racialised colonial-capitalism was a game that was played only by those who had the means and opportunity to take part in the Great Game of empire-building: stakeholders, government officials and company functionaries. It was certainly not played or spoken by the native communities that came under its influence and who were instead reduced to the status of *objects of knowledge* rather than *subjects who produced knowledge*. And it was not spoken by those Europeans who neither had access to the workings of colonial-capitalism nor had profited directly from it. But what of the discordant voices within that community of language-game-users?

Here it has to be noted that there was hardly a solid consensus on how the language-game of colonial-capitalism was to be played and used even among the empire-builders themselves. In the preceding chapters, we have seen how the configuring of the different lands and spaces that would eventually constitute Southeast Asia was a haphazard project that proceeded with fits and starts. Even as the drums rolled and the bayonets were fixed, the company men and the soldiers and sailors of the British army were never entirely certain of *where* they were and *what* constituted the Southeast Asia that would later be carved up between them and the other European powers.

And among the company men whose task it was to *find* and *know* that place that would later be called Southeast Asia, there was seldom universal agreement as well. It was here, in the conflicting reports and accounts of Southeast Asia penned by the very men whose job it was to know, dominate and eventually colonise it, that we come across some of the most interesting instances of epistemic and cognitive dissonance. Not to be forgotten is the contribution of John Anderson, the company man whose jaunt across Sumatra we have looked at in chapter 5. Anderson may have served the East India Company as one of its loyal functionaries, but no unthinking pen-pusher was he. His account of Sumatra, as we have seen earlier, flew in the face of popular prejudice against Sumatrans (and Asians in general) at the time, and while other company men were inclined to paint the island and its inhabitants in lurid hues, his was the lone sensible – albeit terminally dull – and contrarian voice that maintained that Sumatra was a *safe* place to do business in. When we compare the tone and tenor of Anderson's writings to that of Raffles, Crawfurd, Brooke, Mundy or Keppel, he stands out in bold relief as one of the very few company men who was not inclined to believe in, or perpetuate, the stereotypes about Southeast Asians that were in currency then. Though other company men and military men of his time saw the region as a place overrun by cannibals, headhunters and pirates, Anderson saw the Sumatrans he met and dealt with as human

beings – people who, by his own account, lived lives that were every bit as mundane and boring as his own. Granted that Anderson's own concerns were commercial in nature, and that he also wished to stuff the coffers of the company he served, his narrative remains useful and important as a counter-point to the allegation that *all* the functionaries of the East India Company were engaged in a spurious reinvention of Southeast Asia that would serve as the justification for military intervention and subsequent colonisation.

John Anderson was not an outsider to the language-game of colonial-capitalism, and it has to be remembered that he was a creature of the East India Company, and that he worked deep within the belly of the beast. His *Mission to the East Coast of Sumatra* never became a hit, and Anderson himself was never knighted, but when his work is placed alongside those of his contemporaries, he stands out as one of the very few original voices within the company who did not fall prey to the Occidental nightmare of the exotic East Indies.

8.c 'And Others Become Obsolete and Forgotten': The Demise of the Language-Game of Racialised Colonial-Capitalism

> And on the pedestal these words appear:
> 'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;
> Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
> Nothing beside remains. 'Round the decay
> Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
> The lone and level sands stretch far away.
> – Percy Bysshe Shelly, 'Ozymandias' (1818)

In his study of the complex dialectical relationship between Islamism and Eurocentrism, Bobby Sayyid argued that the rise of political Islam – Islamism – was only possible when the availability of the language of Islam in the public domain could be articulated as a counter-hegemonic discourse.[15] There is a Wittgensteinian aspect to this argument, which relates to Wittgenstein's claim that new language-games may come into being, while 'others become obsolete and forgotten'.[16] In the case of Iran, which is one of

15 Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear*, 73.

16 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, proposition 23.

the examples that Sayyid cites, Islam had always been a feature of Iranian society and the vocabulary and symbols of Islam permeated all levels of Iranian society. But political Islam only became a powerful counter-hegemonic force when it became clear that the Westernising, Eurocentric and secular regime of the Shah of Iran was on the verge of toppling upon itself as a result of the crisis of development occasioned by its capital-driven development policy. The ideas of the secular state and modern nationalism did not suddenly disappear overnight, and Islamism did not suddenly materialise out of nowhere: The shift in the language-games that were used in the public domain were partly due to the breakdown of the political economy of Iran and the failure of the institutions of the state, rendering the nationalist-modernist project of the Shah distant and irrelevant to the lives of many. This underscores the other argument of discourse analysis: which is that while reality may be discursively constructed, that discursive construction of the socio-political world must have resonate with the structural realities on the ground.

The same fate was in store for the language-game of racialised colonial-capitalism by the middle of the twentieth century. Despite the consensus of opinion between the likes of Raffles, Crawfurd and the other company functionaries and colonial officials who came after them, theirs was a language-game that was always limited to those who were part of, and who benefitted from, the political economy of colonialism. From the outset this was a language-game of those who were part of a larger order of power – both military and epistemic – but that order would later be challenged by the first generation of anti-colonial native activists, many of whom were themselves the products of the colonial system of education and administration that were installed in the colonies of Southeast Asia as Roff and Milner have noted.[17]

The most devastating blow to the political economy of empire, however, came from the successive world wars that rocked Europe between the 1910s to the 1940s, which rendered hollow the pretension to might and power that the Western empires once claimed. Decolonisation followed suit in the wake of World War II, as it became evident that neither Britain nor France nor Holland could hold on to their colonial possessions in the East. With the retreat of empire came the demise of the language-game of colonial-capitalism. When Prime Minister Harold Macmillan spoke of the 'wind of change' that was sweeping across Asia and Africa during his address

17 See Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, and Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*.

in Cape Town in 1960 – Macmillan had served as the Under Secretary for the Colonies in 1942 – it was clear that the game was up: The powers of Western Europe would not be able to maintain their vast empires any longer, and a new language-game of international relations would be required; one that recognised the independence of former colonies that would soon become sovereign states. (Albeit new sovereign states whose geographical borders were the result of the colonial past.)

The result of decolonisation is the Asia that we know today, festooned by nation-states that still bear the imprint of the colonial encounter. Though colonialism may be over, and its language-game unspoken, lingering residual traces of that colonial discourse and governmentality remain in many places: From the colonial nostalgia regurgitated and dished out in the swanky boutique hotels that dot the urban landscape of Asia, peddling memories of an age since past, to the legal architecture of many postcolonial states whose constitutions, judiciary and parliamentary systems were the tools put in place by the old order that once sustained the colonial state. Looking at the map of Southeast Asia today, it is clear that the geopolitical divisions we see now are the result of the colonial era a hundred years ago. While the international community has been able to reimagine space and territoriality when it comes to Antarctica and outer space,[18] they have been less able to reimagine the terrestrial world around them in terms that exceed the economy of international relations discourse. The nation-state has been accepted as inevitable in Burma/Myanmar – and the rest of Southeast Asia – as argued by Taylor[19] and power has been passed from one colonial power to the next postcolonial power, without much radical alteration.[20] The Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 that split the Malacca Straits between the Dutch and the British managed to divide the common world once shared by both Peninsula Malays and their Sumatran kith and kin, and that divide has never truly healed. Likewise, the border between Peninsula Malaysia and Thailand remains the same since the signing of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty; and was further augmented by the Anglo-Thai Peace Treaty (1946), which sought to protect Britain's interests even as the sun of empire was descending.[21] Modern-day Indonesia may be a state where more than 250

18 Wong Meng Yan, 'Imagining Ice and Infinity'.

19 Taylor, *The State in Burma*.

20 Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, *From British to Bumiputera Rule*.

21 According to the terms of the 1946 Anglo-Thai Treaty, Thailand would respect the request of Britain never to build a canal across the Kra Ithmus, which would have jeopardised the geo-economic leverage that Singapore had, which was then still a British colony (Panda, 'How a Thai Canal Could Transform Southeast Asia').

(powerless) royal houses coexist within the framework of a centralised republic, but its territory today is basically the territory of the Dutch East Indies of old. The Philippines likewise remains confined to the space that was carved up and claimed by the Spanish and later the Americans, and despite the centuries of contact, movement and migration between the southern islands of the Philippine archipelago and the northern coast of Borneo (present-day Sabah, in East Malaysia), the shared world of the Suluk, Illanun and Bajao peoples – once deemed as pirates by the likes of Brooke, Keppel and Mundy – has never come together again.[22] The language-game of colonial-capitalism may be a dead language today, but even in death its traces remain in the form of the political-epistemic divisions that have permanently marked the landscape and society of Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia's understanding of itself is another complex topic that would be worthy of a book: Despite the geographical proximity of the countries of the ASEAN region, their shared material culture, as well as the legacy of intra-Southeast Asian migration and settlement, few Southeast Asian countries have a deep understanding of their neighbours or an awareness of their shared, collective past.[23] Southeast Asia remains, it has to be remembered, a region where right-wing ethno-nationalist groups can threaten war against neighbouring countries on the grounds that their neighbours have 'stolen' their beloved cultural icons such as chicken rice or batik cloth, of all things. Yet even as the ethno-nationalists of the region trumpet their cultural achievements and uniqueness to the world, they often fail to note that their own national identities today are grounded on the same repertoire of stock images, tropes and themes that were laid out in the nineteenth century. Until today we still come across the static images of Javanese natives from Raffles' *History of Java* being reproduced in contemporary postcards, T-shirts, mugs and posters across Indonesia.

That national identities in Southeast Asia remain configured along the lines of an oppositional dialectics between 'us' and 'them' tells us how deeply ingrained the compartmentalising and differentiating logic that was installed during the colonial era remains until today. ASEAN states may cooperate on a number of levels from regional security to economic integration, on issues ranging from cross-border pollution to the proliferation of

22 In the case of the Philippines, the modern republic is still unable to come to terms with the historical legacy of the Moro-Muslim sultanates of the past, and this is reflected (still) in the absence of Moro history in the national history curriculum. See Prudent, 'Madrasah Education Reform in the Philippines'.

23 See Noor, 'Trauma and History', Noor, 'ASEAN's Multiple Overlapping Borders', and Noor, 'How Indonesia Sees ASEAN and the World'.

terrorist networks – but they do so as *individual* states that remain *distinct* and *apart* from one another. And as we have tried to show in the preceding chapters, one of the factors that contributed to this sense of separateness and difference between neighbouring polities and peoples was the way in which the different constituent parts of Southeast Asia were imagined and portrayed in the past.

Thus to answer the questions that were raised at the very beginning of this book – *What* is Southeast Asia? and *Where* is Southeast Asia? – we need to look at how the signifier Southeast Asia is used today. (Wittgenstein's point being that to know the meaning of a word 'is to use it in the same way as other people do'.[24]) If Southeast Asia and its constituent parts were first conceived of in the boardrooms and offices of Western militarised companies and colonial departments in Western Europe in the nineteenth century, today it is an idea that is shared and circulated among the technocrats of the ASEAN region. It is a signifier whose currency and meaning is clear when we enter the life-world and language-game of ASEAN technocrats, policy-makers and businessmen and women. Here we encounter tropes and themes that would be familiar to those who have followed the discursive construction of the idea of Southeast Asia over the past century and a half: ASEAN is seen as a *market*, is seen as a *securitised* region, is seen as an *exotic* space for tourists. The meaning of *Southeast Asia*, as ever, remains unanchored to any essential or idealised metaphysical notion, but its meaning becomes clear in the instrumental use of the signifier itself.

If such is the state of Southeast Asia today, and such is the manner in which the signifier 'Southeast Asia' is understood and used by Southeast Asians themselves, then one might ask the question: So what? What is the point of trying to demonstrate the constructed nature of Southeast Asia as an idea and a sign?

The point of this work – if it has any utility at all – is to show that Southeast Asia has never been a natural, given, fixed entity that could be ostensibly defined by merely pointing to a location on a map. As the communities of present-day Southeast Asia engage with the question of identity and meaning in their lives, and devise their own ways and means to question the primacy of the state, of political frontiers or the modalities of power,[25] there have been some who have called for an appreciation of the historical connections and instances of cross-fertilisation, cultural exchange and borrowing across borders as well. (An example would be the engagement

24 Quoted in Malcolm, 'Wittgenstein on Language and Rules', 155.

25 See, for instance, Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, and Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*.

with the idea of shared, overlapping identities among the itinerant seafarers of Southeast Asia, in the work of the Malaysian-born artist Yee I-Lann.) An awareness of the artificiality of the region's identity and the polysemic character of the sign 'Southeast Asia' is one step in the direction of a larger project of understanding and redefining the region again.

8.d Conclusion: The Power behind the Idea of Southeast Asia

> When I think how history will record someday, that the decisions of an empire were made only by greedy businessmen, scheming generals and conniving politicians...
>
> – Gladstone in *Khartoum* (1966, dir. Basil Dearden)

In summing up as we draw closer to the conclusion of this book, allow me to indulge in one personal anecdote. During my childhood I was sent to study at a boys' school that was run by stern teachers for whom the education of young boys meant incessant periods of marching in line and column, interspersed with maniacal bouts of rugby and soccer. This 'education' was meant to prepare us for the realities of the world, though no one had informed the teachers that the world had moved on since the invention of television. Later during my university days in England, I had the opportunity – for the first time – to meet members of the opposite sex. One fine day in the department cafeteria a girl came up to me and struck up a conversation. At that crucial turning point of my life, I was unable to utter a word and could only stare pathetically at the cup of uninspiring tea in my hand. I was able to pontificate at length about the rarity of tin coins found in Kedah that dated back to the period of Siamese rule, but I had no knowledge of how to court. I realised then that my early education had not been as comprehensive as my teachers claimed it to be; and that I was never taught the language-game of dating. Since then I have harboured two thoughts: An abiding thirst for vengeance against the teachers who hobbled me for life, and the realisation that language-games are never innate, but have to be *taught* and *learned*.

We *learn* the rules of dating, we *learn* the rules of joking, and we *learn* the rules of lying – along with all the other language-games that can be played with the general language that we use. This was, and is, the Wittgensteinian premise upon which the arguments of this book are based. In the same way one learns the language-games of lying, joking, sarcasm and academic

writing, the proponents and practitioners of racialised colonial-capitalism learned the rules of the language-game of racialised colonial-capitalism.

Many of us are undoubtedly familiar with the phrase 'a born liar'. But the label is fundamentally misleading as *nobody* is born with the in-built propensity to lie: We *learn* to lie as we learn how to joke, to be poetic, to speak politely or to write academically. In the same way the language-game of colonial-capitalism was a public discourse that had its rules and norms, and it was a language-game that was learned and taught by those who utilised it for their agendas and ends. That public language-game had a context, both temporal and institutional, and the context was the world of militarised merchant companies that had extra-territorial power and rights to acquire lands and open markets overseas in the name of king and country. There was *nothing natural or essential* about the language-game of colonial-capitalism, any more than there are natural laws and rules for any game that can be played. And the great thing about games in general is that they often demonstrate their constructed nature and how they have evolved – through praxis and negotiation – to become the games that they are.

The other thing about games in general is that they demonstrate the human agency that goes into game-building and game-playing, as games do not ever play themselves, but have to *be* played. What holds true for games in general also holds for language-games. *Lying,* for instance, requires not only the rules of lying, but people to lie – for evidently lying takes place through language and there cannot be lying without someone *doing* the lying. In the same way the language-game of colonial-capitalism required active human agency to be propagated and reproduced.

Which brings me to the point of agency and culpability in the writings on Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century. Through a close reading of the texts considered in this book, I have tried to show that these constructions – of Java, of Sumatra, of Borneo, of Burma and eventually of Southeast Asia in general – were hardly accidental or contingent, but crafted, deliberate and agenda-driven. Crawfurd's depiction of Burma as a stagnant land oppressed by tyranny was not the result of his pen suddenly taking off on its own free will, any more than Raffles' account of an antiquated Java or Keppel's account of a piratical Borneo were the results of stationery gold wild. These books were *written*, by men who had *ideas* of what they wanted to write about beforehand. And though those ideas of Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Burma or Southeast Asia may have germinated in Europe, or in the tropical climes of Southeast Asia, they were nonetheless ideas that can be attributed to particular agents and actors who were themselves part of the enterprise of colonial-capitalism in Southeast Asia.

Men like Raffles and Crawfurd, Keppel and Mundy, were of a rational, calculating, even scientific disposition. But let us not forget that these were skills – Cohn's investigative and historiographical modalities – that were put to work in the service of empire. When Raffles wrote of the Javanese as *degenerate*; when Crawfurd wrote of the Burmese as either *tyrants* or *victims of tyranny;* when Brooke, Mundy, Keppel and Marryat wrote of the people of Borneo as *pirates and headhunters*, these were obviously not statements of fact – but the writings do reveal the subject-positions of the respective authors, who were men of empire, and who saw the native Other as either colonial subjects or colonial subjects-to-be. The knowledge/s they produced – including the instrumental fictions that they weaved – was shared among those who were embedded in structures and institutions of power, and as I have tried to show in this book, the depictions of the polities and communities of Southeast Asia that were contained in their works were instrumental in the strategies of othering, distancing, demonising and colonising the societies they studied. The final product was a *knowledge that kills* – to quote Todorov – and where coming to know the Other certainly did not imply empathy or identification with the Other.[26] Rather it was a knowledge that sought to pin down the meaning of Southeast Asia and Southeast Asians, and to define them in a totalised manner that arrested them semantically according to a logic of othering that associated Southeast Asian identity with themes and tropes that would become all-too-familiar in other parts of the empire as well: As natives who were lazy (Raffles, Anderson), stupefied and backward (Raffles, Crawfurd), victims of tyranny (Crawfurd, Brooke, Snodgrass) or lawless (Brooke, Mundy, Keppel, Marryat). And as for the *thing* that was Southeast Asia itself, I have tried to show how the different accounts looked at in this book present us with not a singular Southeast Asia but rather several different, at time contradictory, accounts of the place and its people. In answer to Heidegger's question '*Where* should we grasp a thing?' we are nudged in the direction of the answer: That nowhere do we find the thing-in-itself but only particular things; and in this case the things-in-question were the ideological constructions of men of the East India Company.

Being a company man – a servant of the East India Company or the other Western militarised commercial corporations then – meant something more than signing a contract and donning a company uniform. Like Foucault's *peasant-turned-soldier* or Bourdieu's *homo academicus*, these were men whose subjectivities were shaped as a result of the rites and

26 Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, 185.

rituals of mutuality and association that brought them into the company's architecture of power and knowledge, which in turn impacted upon their values and worldviews. Though some of them may have been hard pressed by their economic-social circumstances, many of those who made it to the top of that order of knowledge and power were not shanghaied into the enterprise unwillingly. These men did not apologise for being colonialists and imperialists, and we today should not seek or offer apologies on their behalf; or hide the other aspects and results of their labour, which led to communities divided, nations torn apart, local knowledge/s depreciated or appropriated (Kamatham, 2015[27]) and native power usurped. After all, William Cobbett found no reason to apologise for Raffles, Crawfurd or the company they served – so why should we?

As stated at the very beginning of this book, *this has been a book about books* – specifically books about Southeast Asia that were written in the nineteenth century, in the era of racialised colonial-capitalism. As such, my main concern has been the manner in which these books were written, and my focus has been on the tropes and metaphors, narrative devices and discursive strategies, that were used by the authors as they penned their works on Southeast Asia; and how they imagined and framed the different parts of the region, long before the term Southeast Asia was used as we use it today. This has *not* been a history of Southeast Asia – for better historians have laboured upon that subject and done justice to it – but rather a history of Western (specifically British) colonialism in Southeast Asia, examined through the prism of colonial-era literature.

It is through a close reading of the works of those nineteenth-century authors – many of whom were themselves functionaries of colonial companies and related institutions that supported the colonial-capitalist enterprise – that we can see the workings of a language-game of power and domination as well; and that may be instructive in helping us see similar discursive strategies at work today, be it in the workings of the discourse on the 'war on terror' or national security or nation-building in Southeast Asia and elsewhere – where likewise men and women of power seek to further

27 The scholar Ram Ganesh Kamatham has looked at how the British intervention in South India – which led to the Anglo-Mysore Wars and the eventual defeat of Tipu Sultan – ended up appropriating local South Indian ballistics technology and led to the adaptation of the rockets used by the Indian army against the British forces, leading to the development of the Congreve rocket. Though the Congreve rocket (which was later used elsewhere, including in Borneo) has been seen by some as a British invention, Ram's work highlights its Indian origins and how such local technology was later appropriated by Western powers such as the East India Company See Kamatham, 'The Battle of Pollilur (1780)'.

their respective agendas in worlds that they have discursively constructed around themselves, and where we often see instances of the same sort of instrumental fictions, confirmation bias and blinkered perspectivism that was so evident in the mindset of the servants of the company. For scholars who research and teach area studies it is equally vital to remember that while working on Southeast Asia the region was never a pregiven totality that was static and fully constituted, readily available for study and to be known, but rather the result of a long and complicated process of discovery and invention where the language and methodology of research were crucial in the development of the idea as well. One cannot have a discussion about the historical development of Southeast Asia without discussing the realities of colonialism. The *idea* of Southeast Asia may have been abstract, and the sign polysemic and overdetermined, but it is an idea whose origins can be dated back to an era of gunboat epistemology when knowledge was power, and seldom truly *innocent*.

Appendix A

The full transcript of the article by William Cobbett on the subject of the British invasion of Java

Author's note: I have retained the spelling of words, including the errors, as found in the original. Note that all emphases (*in italics*) are as found in the original.
Cobbett's Weekly Political Register (London), vol. 20, no. 25, 21 December 1811
Summary of Politics
Conquest of the Empire of Java

On Monday, the 16th instant, intelligence was received by our government, that the ships and troops, sent against the Empire of Java, under Rear Admiral Sir Robert Stopford and Sir Samuel Auchmuty, had succeeded in taking the city of Batavia and also the greater part of the Dutch and French European forces in the Empire of Java. The troops landed, it seems, on the 4th of August, Batavia surrendered at discretion on the 8th, and on the 26th, the intrenched and fortified works of Cornelis were forced. The enemy are stated to have lost two thousand in killed and five thousand in prisoners, including among the latter two generals. Our loss is said to have been considerable. The Governor of the island, whose name was Jansens, was a Dutchman, and his troops, about 10,000 in number, were Dutch. The amount of our force, which went from our East India possessions, is not stated in gross; but from the detail of the several corps engaged, it would seem to have amounted to between 15 to 20 thousand land troops, exclusive of the sailors and marines belonging to the squadron employed on the expedition, which, to have conveyed such an army, must have been considerable, though its force is not particularly stated, an omission so common to all our dispatches of this nature, that it cannot be fairly attributed to accident. The contest seems to have been very sanguinary; for Sir Samuel Auchmuty states, in his dispatch, that "in the action of the 26th, the numbers killed were immense, but it has been impossible to form any accurate statement of the amount. About one thousand have been buried in the works, multitudes were cut down in the retreat, the rivers were choked up with dead, and the huts and woods were filled with the wounded, who have since expired. We have taken near 5,000 prisoners, among whom are 2 General Officers, 34 Field Officers, 70 Captains, and 150 Subaltern Officers; [770] General Jansens made his escape with difficulty, during the action, and

reached Buitinzorg [sic], a distance of 30 miles, with a few cavalry, the sole remains of an army of 10,000 men. This place he has since evacuated, and fled to the Eastward." – Lord Minto himself, the Governor General of India, repaired to Batavia, the capital of the Empire, and thence he writes his dispatches, dated on the 1st of September. Directly after his arrival there he took formal possession of the sovereignty of the country and of sovereign sway of the inhabitants, by the following proclamation: – "Proclamation. In the name of his Majesty George the Third, King of the United Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland. – In consequence of the glorious and decisive victory obtained by the British Army under the command of his Excellency Lieutenant General Sir Samuel Auchmuty, Commander in Chief, on the 26th of August, by which the French troops were driven out of the strong position at Meester Cornelis, upon which their generals placed their sole reliance, and by which their whole army, with hardly any exception, either fell in the field or were made prisoners of war; Lieut. Gen. Jansens fled in great disorder to Buitenzorg; but, knowing that the victorious troops would soon pursue him, he has precipitately quitted that post also, and has directed his flight, in despair, to some other quarter, after having refused a second time the invitation of the English, to enter into arrangements for the benefit of the country, which he left without defence at their disposal. – Lieutenant General Jansens, who represented *the French Sovereign* in Java, having thus abandoned his charge, and avowed by his actions his incapacity to afford any further protection to the country; the *French Government* is hereby declared to be dissolved, and the *British authority to be fully and finally established in the island of Java*, and all the possessions of the French in the Eastern Seas. This proclamation is issued for the information [771] of the good people of Java, in order that they may strictly conform to the duties of *allegiance and fidelity to their Sovereign George the Third*, and they are hereby enjoined and commanded, *under the most severe penalties*, to abstain from holding correspondence with, or affording aid or any assistance to the members of the late French Government or its adherents; but on the contrary support with zeal and obey with fidelity, the authority with which they are now happily united. *A provisional form of administration* will immediately be established, and as soon as that is performed the *beneficent and paternal disposition of the British Government* towards the people of Java will be manifested by the publication of such regulations as may be successively adopted. Done at Weltevreede, the 29th day of August, 1811, by his Excellency the Governor General of British India. (Signed) Minto" – Thus the conquest was completed in due form, and assumed all characters of permanent sway over the whole nation, without any exception to the rights

of any of the native sovereigns of the country; and, in one of his dispatches, Lord Minto observes, that this conquest being completed, the British nation has neither an enemy nor a rival left from the Cape of Good Hope to Cape Horn; that is to say, in nearly one-half of the globe. His lordship speaks of this achievement as being full of glory and advantage, and appears to anticipate from it the most beneficial results. – The First Lord of the Admiralty, in communicating this intelligence to the Lord Mayor of London, calls it "*satisfactory* intelligence"; the ministerial writers exultingly observe, that this puts the finishing hand to the work of conquest out of Europe, there being now three out of the four quarters of the world, wherein neither a French nor Dutch flag is flying; and, it is to be remarked, that, on the day that the intelligence arrived, those old proclaimers of victory and joy, the Park and Tower guns, were fired, – Yet am I, for my part, of the opinion, that this conquest, great as is its magnitude, will be of *no advantage* to this country; nay, that it cannot fail to be an injury to her; for which opinion I will now proceed to give my reasons. – Were I to confine my view to that description of persons in the kingdom, who are the dispensers, or the objects, of *patronage*, I should be far from saying, that there [772] was no advantage in this conquest; for, to them, it will, for a while, at least, prove a most abundant harvest; as it already has proved, I dare say, to those immediately concerned in it, the worth of the *prizes* being immense. I look at the conquest as it will affect the whole nation; as it will affect those who will have to pay the taxes, and to expose their persons in defence of this our own country; and then, I am to enquire, how it will aid the pecuniary resources, or add to the security of the country from foreign attack. – But first of all, let us see what this conquest consists of. A country, in geographical extent equal to England; and in population exceeding it by two thirds. The island, or Empire, of Java, consists, as it is computed, 30 millions of souls. The Dutch were the absolute masters of the island, though there are in it, one *Emperor*, several *Kings*, and many princes of inferior note, who are suffered to retain their titles, but are the mere puppets of their European masters, who take upon themselves the trouble of governing, especially in those two important particulars, the *administration of justice* and *the collection and disposal of the revenues;* that is to say, the absolute power over men's *lives* and *purses*. We have now stepped into the shoes of the Dutch, or rather, those of their sovereign, the Emperor Napoleon; and, indeed, the proclamation of Lord Minto, above quoted, clearly shows, that we mean to whole [sic] the country by the same tenure. That proclamation takes the absolute sovereignty from the hands of Napoleon and puts it into those of George the Third, who has certainly been the greatest conqueror, as well

as the greatest warrior, who has sat on the English throne. He has lost some territory, indeed, and some subjects, in his time; but what were the three millions, which the American States contained, at the time of their separation, compared to the scores of millions, which he has conquered and who are become his liege subjects in Asia and Africa? – The Empire of Java produces great abundance of articles of commerce, especially Spices, Indigo, Cotton, Coffee and Sugar; and, we are told, in the ministerial prints, that we have, by this conquest, supplanted the Dutch-French in the most valuable part of their commercial possessions and pursuits. – These are fine pictures to draw; fine exhibitions to make to a people who are called upon so often by the tax-gatherer for the means of supporting the [773] war; fine matter for a paragraph or a speech; but, let us not be dazzled by them; let us examine the thing with closer eyes. – In the first place, as to our relationships with Europe and North America: Does the reader suppose, that the having made this conquest will tend to convince the nations of Europe, that Napoleon alone has the range of all conquests and ambition in his breast; that it will tend to convince them, that they ought to hate him and make other efforts against him, because he is not content with a sway over the original territories of France; that it will convince them, that we are not actuated by any motives of ambition, and that we are at war purely for our own defence, and for the restoration of the liberties and independence of the nations of Europe; will this conquest, in short, tend to make the nations of Europe regard us solely in the light of *deliverers*? We have added here 30 millions of people to our conquered subjects, a number far surpassing all those whom Napoleon has added to the Empire of France; and, if our conquests in India, in Africa and in the islands of America, since the commencement of the French Revolution, be taken into the account, all that he has done in the way of conquest is, as to the number of subjects, a mere trifle; and as the vulgar saying is, he, as a conqueror, is a fool to us. – And, as to the Dutch nation, what impression must this conquest produce upon their minds? Will they like us the better for it? And will they like him the worse? Will it not rather make them zealous in his cause, and reconcile them to his sway, as the only means of protection against our power? They have been reproached by our writers for submitting quietly to that sway; but these writers have never pointed out the means by means the Dutch were in any way to preserve themselves from submission to us and to Prussia. The states of Holland were compelled to seek protection from the old Government of France, upon whom they actually depended upon for their safety; and, that which has taken place now is very little, if any, more humiliating than their then situation. – As to the part that Napoleon is acting

towards Holland, it is not that of a conqueror, to be sure. The country, whose Government was then at war against France, was conquered by France in 1795, just after the retreat of our army, under the Duke of York, out of [774] Flanders. From that time, Holland has been at the disposal of France; it has been under the sway of France; and now it has become part of the French Empire, as much as Ireland has become part of the United Kingdom, sending, in the same manner, deputies, or members, to the Legislative Assembly in Paris. – The right of conquest has never been disputed until of late. It is the way, and the only way, that the sway over countries is acquired; but the folly of our complaints against Napoleon, on this score, is, that every word we say, is a word said against ourselves; for, by what other right than that of conquest, do we hold so great a part of India, and by what other right have we divested so many sovereigns of their authority? Talk of putting down sovereigns, indeed! Why, here, in this single conquest, of which we boast, do we not assume absolute sway over an Emperor and several Kings, as well as over the 30 millions of people of whom they formerly claimed allegiance? – How will this new conquest operate in the mind of the American government? Does the reader think, that it will tend to remove any apprehensions there felt, with regard to the power and views of England? Will it tend to give the President a more favourable opinion of those views? I should think not. I should think, that it would make him doubly fearful of doing anything tending to throw weight into our scale. He must naturally wish to see neither France nor England have the power to domineer over the world; and, of course, when he sees that 'France has not a flag flying in any part of three quarters of the four', he will feel less apprehension at her strides than those of England. Therefore, every conquest that we make tends to give America a stronger and stronger bias towards France. And is it not perfectly ridiculous to hear our writers reproaching the American President for not making our cause his own; for not declaring himself on our side; at the very moment, when these same writers are boasting of our having swept three quarters of the world clean of the French? They say, that England has staked her existence upon the event of this contest, and they tell America, that if we fall, she must fall, too. They are, here, downright alarmists; but what must she think of their alarms, when the next packet brings her accounts of England having, at one single dash, con-[775]-quered more subjects than Napoleon has conquered altogether; and when she hears us not only express no doubts as to the propriety of such conquests, but hears us boast of it as a glorious achievement? – The President, in his late speech, takes a glance at the revolution now going on in South America, and seems to signify his approbation of the change that is likely to be the result. Strong

condemnation has been expressed of that part of his speech here. But, does he not perceive, that the country will, unless independent, fall into the hands of either England or France; and ought he not to wish to see that prevented? This new conquest of ours, will not, I presume, tend to alter his opinions upon that subject; for, why should we stop at Java? Why should Peru and Mexico not be as necessary to us as the kingdoms in Asia? And why should the President of America think more about the conquest of Spain and Portugal than about that of Java? If he takes a view of the *whole* of the conquests of France, he will find them to fall far short of this *one* conquest of England. Let us see a little how the fact stands, when exhibited in figures. France has conquered, or claimed sovereign sway over the following countries, inhabited by the following numbers of people.

Genoa and Tuscany... 1,250,000
Modena and the other Sovereign Dukedoms of Italy... 2,000,200
States of the Pope... 2,000,000
The Two Sicilies... 6,005,396
The United Provinces... 2,758,632
Switzerland... 1,900,000
Hanover, Brunswick, Hamburgh, etc.... 1,145,000
Spain... 11,000,000
Portugal... 1,838,879
Total: 29,898,107

England has conquered and proclaimed full and sovereign authority over the Empire of Java, containing all its inhabitants: 30,000,000

Deduct conquered by France: 29,898,107
Balance in favour of England: 101,893

Now, observe, reader, that this is giving the island of Sicily to France, while it is very well known, that our writers recommend the vigorous measure of taking possession [776] of it for ourselves, and it is also giving her Spain and Portugal, of the latter of which countries it is equally well known that we have actual possession and almost absolute command, and of the former that we say that the French will never obtain the sovereignty. I have here placed the object in the best possible point of view for the enemy; and yet we beat him by 101,893 conquered souls. I beg, therefore, to ask any man in his senses, what should induce the President of America to be alarmed at the progress of French ambition, and to feel no alarm at all at the progress

of English ambition? – I shall be told, perhaps, that there is a great deal of *difference* in the two cases. O aye! A great deal indeed. I am well aware of that: namely, that the one is *French* and the other is *English;* but that is all the difference that I can see. There is indeed another difference to *us*; that is, that our conquests are in another hemisphere, whereas those of Napoleon are close to home; are of territories and people bordering upon France, and speaking, in great part, the French language. But this, while not an important distinction with *us*, will not, I should suppose, weigh much with the American President, who can scarcely be more alarmed at that power which confines its conquests to Europe and to its own borders, than at those of a power, that sends its conquering fleets and armies to the utmost extent of the globe. I am told, that Napoleon would gladly extend his conquests to distant countries if he could; my answer is, that his inability to do it must render him less an object of fear with America. So that, in whatever way I view the matter, I cannot help thinking, that, as far as this new conquest of ours have any effect at all upon the minds of the American government and people, the effect will be that of giving them a strong disinclination than before existed of throwing any part of their weight into our scale in the present contest, which, in spite of all our boasting, we yet feel to be *for our existence for a nation independent of France*. – And here we come to the second question: What advantage will *this* country, what advantage will the *people of England, Scotland and Ireland*, derive from this conquest? That it will benefit those who possess *patronage* and those who crave for its largesses [sic] I know very well; that it opens a vast field for those who wish to get fortunes without labour or study; that [777] it will be an out-let for hundreds and thousands of persons who for divers reasons require a voyage to the antipodes; that it will disburden many and many an individual who is loaded with that species of poor rates which the parish knows nothing of; that it will tend to make elbow-room upon the sinecure and pension lists; that it will do all this I will readily allow; for Java with its 30,000,000 of people and all its Emperors and Kings cannot be taken proper care of without a great number of persons of this country any more than they were by the Dutch or the French rulers. We are told that these latter "took care of the *administration of justice*, and of the *public revenue*"; that is not to be doubted, that we shall take as good care, at least, of these matters, as they did. Here will be an abundance of *lawyers* and *tax-gatherers* wanted, and, will any man say, that we are, as to numbers, at least, deficient in either; and with regard to the latter, can any man have the face to say, that he supposes, that we fall short, in point of experience and ability, of any nation to be found on the globe, whether we speak of taxes to be raised on land or

water? – To impart, to "the *good people of Java*" as Lord Minto calls them, a portion of what we enjoy in the above-named descriptions of persons the nation might, and doubtless, would, be very willing; but still I ask, what *advantage* the conquest will produce to the people of this kingdom; to the people who perform the labour and pay the taxes of the country? – Will it cause less labour; or, which is more to the point, will it cause *less taxes to be paid* by the present payers of taxes; for all centers there at last? That it will *not*, I am, for my part, fully convinced; and indeed, I am pretty confident, that I shall be able to show to my readers, when the proper time comes, that it will have caused an *augmentation* of the taxes. I never yet saw one of our conquests which did not produce such an effect, in which respect our conquests are of a nature precisely the opposite of the conquests of our enemy, who always makes a shift *tirer parti*, as he calls it, or as we call it, *to turn to good account*, the conquests that he makes. In short, he always makes the people, whom he conquers, assist in carrying on the war against us, while we, as far as my observation has gone, always incur a new burden with every new conquest. I shall be told, that this conquest clears the Eastern seas of [778] every French sail, and that we shall require less men-of-war, and, of course, less expense to protect our commerce in those seas. May be so; but, that is not to my point; which is simply this: will the conquest *diminish our taxes*? If it does not, it is worth nothing to us. – Yes, it might possibly be, if it rendered us at home more secure against those deadly blows which the enemy aims at us; and here we come to the last and the main point of our discussion; for, though the conquest were not to lessen our taxes; nay, if it were to augment them if that can well be; still if it lessened our danger, if it added to our security, I should freely say, then it was a good thing; a thing for which we ought to toss our hats into the air, to hollow, and to make bonfires, the age for which latter seems, by-the-bye, to be passed. I do not, however, see how this can possibly be. For, in the first place, Java will require *European troops;* and have we these to spare? All the good things in Java; with 30 millions of people; all the justice, all the revenue, will require *troops*. But, granted that we can still find troops to send thither, still there is nothing *added* to that force which is to protect us against the fleets that are building for the avowed purpose of our subjugation, and to augment which force so many schemes have been resorted to. The reader cannot carry in his mind one half of the devices that have been put in practice to get men into the army. Measure after measure have been adopted; law after law; there have been regulars and militia, and fencibles and supplementary militia and army of reserve and local militia and volunteers and volunteering out of the militia into the regulars. In short, what

has not been resorted to augment and keep up the military force in this kingdom? Now, it will, I suppose, be admitted, that these measures have all been *necessary to the safety of the country;* I mean, to the *defence of the country against the French*, for, as to any *other* danger; as to any *other* purpose for keeping up this force, it has never, at any rate, been openly avowed. Well, then, if all these means of raising men, means so distressing to the people, so burdensome to the parishes and so ruinous to many individuals, have been necessary for the defence of the country against the French, who are just on the other side of the Channel, must not that defence be rendered less secure, must not our danger be augmented [779] by sending 15 or 20 thousand troops, and keeping them up, in the newly conquered Empire? Shall I be told, that the troops required for the defence of the empire of Java will go from our Indian Empire? My answer is, they cannot be spared thence; or that, if they can, we have been making great waste of money and of lives in keeping up so large a force in our Indian Empire, and that, too, at a time, when our superfluous force might have been employed in Spain, or Portugal, or at Walcheren. No: it is clear, that we must send out an additional number of troops to those empires; and then, I say, that we shall, by so much that this number amounts to, weaken our defences at home. If, indeed, we could hire foreign troops, at so much per head, as we did in the American war, there would be nothing but the money wanting; but these, I believe, are not, now-a-days, to be got to serve *out of Europe*. So that we must, it seems to me, make an absolute deduction, from our native force, for the purpose of securing the possession of this newly conquered Empire. Thus do our conquests work in a way precisely the opposite of Napoleon, who from all the countries he conquers, draws legions to fight against us, and whose armies now in the Peninsula, are well known to consist in great part of Germans, Italians, Hollanders, Swiss and even Polanders. If we, indeed, could bring a hundred or two of thousands of our newly conquered subjects into the field against the French; we could bring a good stout army of those brave people, 30,000,000 of whom suffer themselves to be held in subjection by 15 or 20 millions [sic]: If we could bring these into the field against the French, we might see fine works; but, as matters are, the conquering of them will not give us the smallest security against France, and must, as I think I have shewn, weaken the defences we already have. – At the time when the peace of Amiens was made, the ministers and Mr Pitt (for whom, in fact, the peace was made by Mr Addington), told the nation, in their speeches in Parliament, that *extension of dominion was no proof of an increase of real power.* Their motive for doing this was plain enough. They, who had all been in office during the Anti-Jacobin war, had to justify

themselves for having suffered France to retain such an extension of territory as she did retain at the peace. They, therefore, to [780] hide their disgrace, held forth that France would rather be weakened than strengthened by her new acquisitions. They were told of Antwerp and of the fleets that would grow up there; but, they still insisted that an extension of territory would tend to weaken the power of France; and Lord Hawkesbury, who had once talked of marching to Paris, said, that all the territorial conquests of France were more than over-balanced by our acquisitions in the way of *"capital, credit and confidence";* whereupon Lord Castlereagh produced a string of statements and calculations about imports and exports, proving the truth of Lord Hawkesbury's assertion. These worthy people forgot, or seem to have forgotten, wholly, that they had, a thousand times over, insisted on the necessity of continuing the war in order to drive the French within their old boundaries; and that one of the great alleged grounds of the war, in the first instance, was the necessity of preventing the French from opening the navigation of the Scheldt. All this they had forgotten, or supposed that the people had forgotten it; but at any rate, they now all said, that there was no danger to England from the extension of the dominion of France; for, that extension was no proof of an increase in power. – Now, passing over the inconsistency, the change of tone, of these people, and passing also over the fact, that we are every day of our lives inveighing against Napoleon for extending his dominions, and that we are now, as we say, "fighting the battles of England" in endeavouring to keep him from conquering Spain and Portugal; passing all this over, let us see how this position of Lord Hawkesbury applies to our present case. As a *general* proposition it certainly is not true; for, if it were, what state ever need ever be afraid of the aggrandisement of its neighbour; what state would ever complain of its neighbour's conquests? If it were true as a general proposition, little states would be more powerful than great ones, which it would be burlesque to attempt to maintain. Conquests, extension of territory, by adding the means of warfare, generally add power to that which a country already possesses, as was known in the rise of Prussia, where a kingdom, and one of the most powerful in Europe, grew out of the addition of territory and subjects, from time to time made to a petty electorate. But, then the conquered parts, the conquered territory, must be contiguous; [781] nature must assist policy. The territory must be advantageously places, and the people must be able and willing to defend their new government; they must bring no burden to the conqueror, but must bring him assistance. Where this is the case, extension of territory is the proof, and the most certain of all proofs, of an increase in power. This is the case with the conquests of Napoleon. The countries of

which he has assumed the sovereignty lie contiguous to France; they are parted from her only by imaginary bounds, such as those that separate Middlesex from Hertfordshire; the people of those countries have had an intimate intercourse with France before. When you get to Hamburgh or Rome, indeed, the connection was more remote, but still there was a connection by means of intermediate countries, and when these had been annexed to France, the annexation of the former partook less of the odious nature of a conquest. But, how is it with our conquests? What connection is there between us and the people conquered? They knew us not as neighbours but merely as conquerors; and of course, we have no power over them, other than that of the sword; no principle to govern by but that of fear. From such conquests no military aid is to be expected; but, on the contrary, they demand a part of our own military means to secure us the possession of them. Nothing is to be drawn from them in the way of taxes; for all the proceeds of those are to be swallowed up by the persons deputed to rule over the conquered; and, if we want any proof of this fact, it is found in the experience of our colonies, not one of which ever yet sent a shilling to the Exchequer. Far different, therefore, are the conquests which the conqueror annexes to his own dominions than those which he holds *at a distance*. And this is the difference between the conquests of France and those of England. The former gives strength to the conqueror and the latter weakness. The former are like fresh battalions brought up to join the main army; the latter like towns captured in a country where the battle is not to be fought… [782] Some persons think, that these distant conquests will, at any rate, be worth something to us, as objects of exchange in the negotiating of a peace. Did colonies tell in this way at the *last* peace? Did they purchase a single yard square of European territory? Did they take one jot of power out of the hands of France? No man will say that they did; and why should they do it at another peace? If, indeed, the taking of the Empire of Java would afford us even a chance of diminishing the power of Napoleon at a peace; if it would make him, for one week, cease his ship-building at Antwerp, I should say that there was some national advantage in it; but, it will not do that; and will, on the contrary, sharpen his desire to destroy the power of England. During the Anti-Jocobin war, when that profound pair of statesmen, Pitt and Dundas, were conquering sugar and coffee islands, the orators in the French tribune promised their country, that they would reconquer those islands on the continent of Europe. "Let the English capture and guard and cultivate and improve our colonies" said they, "we have something else to attend to; and at the peace we will make them deliver them up with their improvements." And were they not as good as their word? – The conquest,

of which we are speaking, cannot, however fail to give an additional degree of desire to Napoleon to destroy the power of England. He sees, as well as we, that there is not a French flag flying in any quarter of the world except Europe; and he cannot see this without a strong desire to put an end to the cause, and to force into action all his resources for that purpose. We do not go about to nip the ramifications of spreading weeds; we do not even give ourselves the trouble to trace to their points the numerous shoots; we look for nothing but the root; and having found that and cut it off, we leave the rest of the work to the ordinary operations of nature and time. The root of all these colonial conquests is here in England. Our enemy will never attempt to reconquer colonies from us; he will leave us the ramifications to [783] themselves; but, as he sees them increase, he will see the necessity increase of getting to the root. In this view of the matter, therefore, I am inclined to think, that, if the conquest of the Empire of Java answers no other purpose, it will not be likely to fail in answering that of rendering the great conflict here even more desperate, more expensive, more bloody, and of longer duration. I do not know that it is possible for Napoleon to make our commercial exclusion from the continent of Europe more complete than it is; but if it be possible, I am sure that this new conquest will be a reason for attempting it; and, indeed, it is folly not to believe, that no exertion will be spared to affect against us all possible mischief, in which Napoleon's measures will, doubtless, be cordially approved of by the Dutch. – Such is my view of the nature and probable consequences of the Empire of Java. I am aware that I differ from many persons respecting it, and especially from the editor of the Morning Chronicle, who observes, that our success here points out the sort of warfare that we ought to pursue; but, if he were asked, whether he believes, that the possession of the Empire of Java is equal in value to the possession of any one of the forts at the mouth of the Scheldt, or into that of a single farm in Switzerland or in the late Austrian Flanders, I hardly think that he would venture to answer in the affirmative.

Appendix B

Keeping an eye on the Javanese: Raffles' 'Regulations of 1814 for the More Effectual Administration of Justice in the Provincial Courts of Java'

In 1814 Stamford Raffles, as the lieutenant-governor of Java, passed the 'Regulations of 1814 for the More Effectual Administration of Justice in the Provincial Courts of Java'.[1] The preamble to the new regulations began thus:

> The Honourable the Lieutenant Governor in Council being deeply impressed with the necessity for framing one adequate, impartial, and consistent code, for the prompt and equitable administration of justice in the provincial courts of the island, with a view to give all ranks of people a due knowledge of their rights and duties, and to ensure to them an enjoyment of the most perfect security of person and property; has been pleased that the following regulation be enacted.[2]

According to the regulations of 1814, all the *bupatis* (district chiefs) of Java would come under the control and command of the Resident (Article 2) and that the whole territory of Java would be divided into districts that would be administered by the *bupatis*, who would themselves be under the direction of the colonial Resident (Article 4). The regulations were as much about the administration of justice as they were about the policing of the natives of Java. Within each district there would be sub-districts and divisions where a permanent police presence would be established, in the form of police stations (Article 6). The conduct and administration of the native police force would be in turn the responsibilities of the local headmen (Articles 7, 8, 9, 10, 11), who would also be responsible for the amount of property carried by travellers who travelled through the villages and districts (Article 12).

The regulations of 1814 were largely focused on the movement and settlement of the communities of Java, making sure that there would be a regular census of the local population in villages and towns, and ensuring that the natives of Java would be accounted for wherever they may be on the island. As such, Articles 13 and 14 of the regulations stipulated the need for the drawing of a register of all native subjects, that would note down their

1 Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 2, Appendix, lvi-lxxvi.

2 Ibid., vol. 2, Appendix, lvi.

names, addresses, professions and income, and would also monitor their movements in and around Java if they were to migrate to another locality.

Ultimately it was the Resident who had the power to control the movement and settlement of the native Javanese themselves, for as Article 16 of the regulations stated, those who wished to move from one village to another would require the express permission of the Resident himself (in written form) and would have to report to the local headmen who would in turn report to their own superiors who were beholden to the Resident in the end.

The regulations introduced a curfew system as well, and made it necessary for all village headmen to monitor the arrival and activities to newcomers to their villages. As stated in Article 17 of the regulations:

> 17. As well heads of villages as officers of divisions are required to keep a watchful eye upon all new settlers, to ascertain, if possible, their several characters, from their former places of abode; *and to observe, most particularly, the conduct of such individuals as have no ostensible means of livelihood. They will, too, follow vigilantly the motions of armed persons*, preventing them, as much as they can, from travelling together in large bodies; and, as far as may be practicable, they ought to hinder individuals of every description, but most especially such as are armed with spears, swords, etc. from travelling after eight o'clock at night. (Emphasis mine)

The regulations of 1814 laid out the framework for a native police force that was organised in a hierarchical manner, where the native police would be under the immediate control of their village headmen and supervisors, who in turn were responsible to the district *bupatis*, who in turn were answerable to the colonial Resident (Articles 22, 23, 25, 26). The regulations also stated clearly who among the native administrators and police force had the power and authority to arrest others, under what circumstances, for what reasons, and for how long (Articles 22, 23, 24, 25, 26). The system of the native courts was later outlined in Articles 90, 91, 92, 93.

The regulations of 1814 were aimed at creating a stable situation where the colonial economy could flourish and where any threat to the personal safety of individuals or their property could be reduced to a minimum. But it was also a document that laid equal emphasis on the need to maintain the socio-economic system of colonial Java under British rule, and to that end economic concerns were also paramount. Article 44 of the regulations noted that the economic activity of 'the cultivators of the soil' was of great importance, and even in cases where legal disputes may arise, the Javanese

peasants whose role it was to grow cash crops should not 'be taken away from their labours, to attend a distant seat of justice' and that local village courts ought to be established instead, so that order could be maintained in the rural areas 'at the least possible expense of money or time'.[3] The Javanese peasants whose function was to serve the colonial economy and to grow crops for export were thus confined to their localities and roles within the plural economy. As for the Javanese nobles and chiefs who had been co-opted to serve the British colonial administration, their role was to report not only on the activities of their respective wards, but also to provide a regular stream of information regarding the state of cultivation in their lands (Article 59).[4]

The overriding need for *safety* – which was the rationale for the regulations themselves, as stated at the outset in the preamble – seemed to be intimately linked to the idea of *movement:* Safety lay in the ability to monitor and control the movement – of people, goods, weapons – across the Javanese countryside and it was necessary to ensure that the colonial government and its functionaries had a total monopoly over the power to control such movement. Thus while the *idea* of Javanese identity was being epistemically arrested in Raffles' writing on Javanese history and culture, Javanese bodies were likewise being controlled, restricted and arrested by the new laws and regulations that he introduced. In both body and mind, the Javanese was no longer free.

Through this system the rural population of Java was kept under constant watch, and the growth of the population was monitored via the local native police network that was under the control of the district chiefs. The regulations of 1814 also stipulated that while the native Javanese would be monitored and policed in the interior of Java, 'no Europeans, Chinese or other foreigners, at present settled, or who in the future, may wish to settle in the interior, shall be allowed to reside in any part of the country, beyond the immediate limits of the towns of Batavia, Semarang or Surabaya, unless they present themselves to the Resident, to be regularly enrolled in a register'(Article 144).[5] (The regulations made it clear that 'foreigners' in this case included all Europeans, Chinese, Arabs, Indians and other Asians who originated from any other part of Asia beyond the archipelago (Article 149).[6]) As a result of these restrictions not only were the 'native'

3 Ibid., vol. 2, Appendix, lxi-lxii.
4 Ibid., vol. 2, Appendix, lxiii.
5 Ibid., vol. 2, Appendix, lxxiii.
6 Ibid., vol. 2, Appendix, lxxiii.

Javanese confined to the interior of the island and identified with the land (and their economic function as cultivators of the land), but so were other communities identified as *outsiders* and *foreigners* to Java, and confined to the urban centres along the coast. The fluid world of Java that was recorded in the writings of earlier explorer-scholars like Nieuhof, where cross-cultural exchange and hybridisation was the norm, was brought to an end as a result of these policies, which were intended to divide the communities of Java along both ethnic lines and economic functions.

It is interesting to note that the regulations of 1814 would later be adapted by the Dutch upon their return to Java after 1816, and in the decades to come the Javanese countryside would likewise be monitored and policed by a local native police force that was answerable mainly to the Dutch colonial authorities. By the late nineteenth century the Dutch colonial authorities would further enhance this policing apparatus, making it increasingly difficult for other people of non-Javanese ethnic identity to move and settle in the rural interior, thereby confining the members of the Chinese, Arab and Indian communities to the coastal settlements and cities along the northern Javanese coast – known as the Pesisir. The Dutch would also couch their policies of policing and control in terms of a discourse of 'protection', ostensibly carried out for the benefit of the 'weaker' and 'vulnerable' Javanese who needed to be 'protected' from other 'predatory races' such as the Chinese, who were sometimes referred to with the derogatory term *'bloedzuigers'* (bloodsuckers)[7] as people who were always ready to exploit the Javanese instead.

7 'Sedert wanneer is het Gouvernement zoo anti-Chineesch geworden?', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* (1857), part 1, 168-171 (quoted in Lohanda, *Growing Pains*, 23n3).

Appendix C

James Brooke's detractors in the British Parliament and the Aborigines' Protection Society

Though he would later be praised as one of Britain's empire-builders, James Brooke was the subject of many campaigns by the Aborigines' Protection Society. The society was formed in 1837 by anti-slavery campaigners such as Thomas Hodgkin, William Allen, Thomas Fowell Buxton and Thomas Clarkson. Following the end of the slave trade in England in 1832, members of the anti-slavery movement began to take an interest in the welfare of native communities in Africa and Asia that had come under British colonial rule. James Brooke was a regular target by the society then, which lobbied the British parliament on a number of occasions and called for an investigation into the conduct of Brooke in Borneo. Following the defeat of Brunei and the gaining of Labuan as another British colonial outpost, a renewed campaign against Brooke was launched in London, which managed to gain the support of MPs as well.

A report in the *London Illustrated News* in 1850 gives an account of the society's campaign to open up an enquiry into Brooke's dealings in Sarawak, and to investigate reports that Brooke had offered money to his native allies in return for the killing of Dayak natives:

> On Wednesday evening a public meeting was held at the London Tavern, convened by the Aborigines' Protection and Peace Societies, "to consider (to quote the handbill) the fearful sacrifice of human life on the coast of Borneo in July last year (1849); and to petition Parliament for the total and immediate abolition of the practice of awarding head-money for the destruction of pirates." On the platform were Mr George Thompson, MP, Mr Joseph Sturge, Mr J. Humphreys Parry, the Rev. C. B. Gribble, the Rev. Henry Richards, Mr S. F. Woolmer, Mr Charles Gilpin, Sir Joshua Walmsley, Rev. Dr Cox, and other advocates of the Universal Peace movement. Mr Joseph Sturge, having been called to the chair, read a letter… The Rev. Henry Richards then proceeded to address the meeting, and entered into a lengthened detail of the expedition in July last against the Bornean Dyaks of the Sarabus river, in order to prove that the massacre that followed was deserving of public investigation.
>
> He maintained that there ought to have been evidence, clear, palpable, unequivocal, and abundant, to justify such a forceful act of wholesale

> destruction. Well, all the evidence that these Dyaks had engaged, or contemplated engaging in a piratical expedition, was a report brought to Sir J. Brooke while at Sarawak, that the Sarabus and Sakarran tribes designed to make a piratical attack on certain villages in the Rajang [River area]. That report, which was brought by their known and hereditary enemies, the Malays, he found was never substantiated.
> There was also another report that they threatened to massacre the inhabitants of a small town called Palo, unless they supplied them with arms. There was, however, one more fact against them which he ought to state. They also sent a message to Rajah Brooke, telling him he was an old woman. (Laughter). This was literally the whole of the evidence given by the perpetrators themselves of the grounds on which this tremendous massacre was committed. To show that it was a cold-blooded massacre, and not a struggle between combatants in a degree equally matched, he read a variety of extracts from the accounts of the officers engaged.[8]

Time and again the Aborigines' Protection Society accused Brooke and his native allies of deliberately initiating hostilities with the local Dayak communities in Sarawak on the grounds that they were pirates or were sheltering pirates. The society argued that such charges had to be substantiated by evidence, and that those who were accused were entitled to defend themselves in a proper court of law. For MPs like the liberal abolitionist George Thompson (MP of Tower Hamlets, London), James Brooke was a typical example of the errant Englishman who was operating beyond the pale of the law of England in a foreign land, while serving his private political and economic interests at the same time. The Aborigines' Protection Society drew its support from several politicians, as well as several Christian societies and organisations such as the Free Church of Scotland, which Thompson also supported.

Baring-Gould and Bampfylde noted that Brooke also had many opponents in Parliament, who questioned his motives and credibility, and, on several occasions, he raised the matter of his conduct towards the natives of Sarawak before the house:

> Cobden, Hume, Sidney Herbert, and afterwards Gladstone, as well as others of that faction, took up the cause of the pirates, and the Rajah and the naval officers who had been engaged since 1843 in suppressing the Seribas and Sekrangs were attacked with acrimony as butchers of

8 ['Meeting of the Aborigines' Protection Society'], 74.

> peaceful and harmless natives – and all for the sake of extending the Sarawak Raj. The *Spectator* and *Daily News* bitterly assailed the Rajah, relying upon information supplied via a Singapore newspaper; and the Peace Society and the Aborigines Protection Society…
>
> After having brought the 'cruel butchery' of Beting Maru to the attention of the House of Commons on three occasions, Joseph Hume, on July 12, 1850, moved an address to her Majesty, bringing to the notice of the House 'one of the most atrocious massacres that had ever taken place in his time'. He supported the motion with glaring and wilful mis-statements, and brought disgraceful charges against the Rajah, whom he branded as 'the promoter of deeds of bloodshed and cruelty'. The navy he charged with wholesale murder, and the poor victims of the massacre he described as a harmless and timid people.
>
> Cobden, who supported the motion, called the battle of Beting Maru a human battue, than which there was never anything more unprovoked. He could not do homage to the Rajah as a great philanthropist, seeing that he had no other argument for the savages than their extermination.[9]

Though other British politicians such as Lord Palmerston would come to James Brooke's defence, popular opinion of the man and his conduct would remain divided throughout much of his life. His strongest supporters were the naval officers who took part in Brooke's 'war on piracy', and it was in their writings that Brooke's reputation was polished the most.

9 Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *A History of Sarawak*, 140-141.

Appendix D

The clash between the *HMS Dido* and the ships of the Rajah of Riao: A case of mistaken identity and misappropriation of the signifier 'pirate'

Throughout his account of the *Dido*'s campaign against piracy off the coast of Borneo, Henry Keppel reiterated his commitment to both the anti-piracy campaign and James Brooke whom he obviously admired.[10] But it has to be noted that at no point in his narrative – in either of the two volumes of his work – did Keppel offer a *definition* of what piracy was, or what kind of activity would be construed as piratical. At times the haziness of the concept accounted for the mishaps and misunderstandings that occurred during the *Dido*'s stint in Bornean waters, and one of these instances involved the fateful encounter between the armed boats of the *Dido* and the ships of the Rajah of Riao.

In their zeal to render service to Brooke, the crew of the *Dido* and the small company of boats made up of the longboat, dingy and pinnace did occasionally step beyond the bounds of propriety and decorum. Keppel recorded one such incident in volume 2 of his work.[11] It involved the longboat and pinnace of the *Dido* encountering a number of native boats along the Natunas coast. They sped off when they were spotted.

The *Dido*'s boats chased after the vessels, and as soon as they came into range opened fire on the assumption that they were pirates on the run. Amazingly, and for reasons that remain unclear, midway through the fighting the crews of both ships hailed each other to identify themselves. The crew of the native boats proclaimed that they were men of Riao, sent by their rajah to collect tribute from villages that had sworn allegiance to him. The shooting ceased immediately, for the Rajah of Riao was then an ally of the British and by default any actions conducted by men under his command could not be deemed piratical.

The ill-fated encounter with the rajah's fleet – though it ended up with both sides admitting that they were mistaken – is instructive in the sense that it sheds some light on the murkiness of relations between the British (and other Europeans) the native rulers who were recognised as sovereigns (such as the Rajah of Riao and Rajah Muda Hassim of Sarawak) and other

10 Keppel, *The Expedition to Borneo*, vol. 2, 1-2.

11 Ibid., vol. 2, 8-11.

native malcontents and undecidables who were summarily lumped together under the generic label of 'pirate'.

The incident – which, in today's parlance would be described as an instance of 'friendly fire' – was tragic enough, leaving more than a dozen of the Rajah of Riao's men dead and twenty wounded, five of them mortally so. Though tragic in its outcome – not least for the wives and families of the men slain – there was also a surreal aspect to it as the matter was only resolved when both sides admitted their error. The men of the Rajah of Riao protested their innocence by stating that they had mistakenly thought that the pinnace and longboat of the *Dido* were pirate boats out on the prowl. In their defence, their leader stated that they had been despatched to the coast of Sarawak by their ruler the Rajah of Riao to collect tribute from the local communities of Natunas island.

Keppel's subordinate officers in turn admitted their mistake, having failed to discern the fine line between seafaring warriors out to collect *tribute* and seafaring warriors out to collect *booty*. The crew of the *Dido* offered to dress the wounds of the wounded and apologies were offered by both sides; but elsewhere in Keppel's narrative it is clear that the same treatment would not have been meted out to those who were not recognised by the British, and who were regarded as outlaws.

It is important to note that peace was only restored in this instance when both sides admitted that neither side were pirates, had never been pirates, and had never entertained the thought of becoming pirates. Having established that no pirates were involved, the matter was put to rest – along with the dead who had been blasted at close range with grapeshot. Utilising the signifier 'pirate' by this stage, meant giving a licence to kill; endowing the signifier with both descriptive and prescriptive value. Though it has been overlooked by many, the Natunas incident was perhaps one of the most unusual clashes that took place during the war on piracy, as it is the only recorded incident of a clash that was resolved as a result of an agreement on the meaning and use of the signifier *pirate*.

Appendix E

The construction of the native other in the writings of Hugh Clifford, British colonial resident to Pahang

Hugh Charles Clifford was the first British colonial agent, and later Resident, attached to the Kingdom of Pahang in the Malay Peninsula. Both during and after his posting to Pahang he penned numerous short stories about Pahang and its people.[12] By the time he was sent to Pahang, the era of the East India Company was over, and colonial intervention in Malay affairs was managed by the colonial government based in India and London. Clifford's stories were compiled in two edited volumes, *In a Corner of Asia* (1899) and *The Further Side of Silence* (1916), and in the novel *Saleh: A Prince of Malaya* (1926). He also wrote other works that covered topics and themes related to his own concerns as colonial resident and as an observer of Malay society then, including *Malayan Monochromes*, *The Downfall of the Gods*, *Further India* and *Studies in Brown Humanity*. In his writings, Clifford's interests as both colonial functionary and amateur scholar-observer are evident. As the first colonial functionary who was sent to Pahang to map out the territory and then to establish the first British colonial foothold in the kingdom (at the age of 20), Clifford later came to be regarded as the foremost British expert on all matters related to Pahang and its people, culture and history. A summary of the tales that appeared in the edited volumes *In a Corner of Asia* and *The Further Side of Silence* and the novel *Saleh: A Prince of Malaya* reveals that Clifford's own understanding of the concepts of racial difference and ethnic-racial hierarchies were foremost in his own approach and handling of Malay affairs. Below is an overview of some of the stories written by Clifford that appeared in the edited works *In a Corner of Asia* and *The Further Side of Silence.*

'At the Court of Pelesu'[13] (1899)

Among the many stories that were written by Hugh Clifford, 'At the Court of Pelesu' is perhaps the best-known and most personal. Though

12 For further reading, see Clifford's, *In a Corner of Asia*, *The Further Side of Silence*, and *Saleh*.

13 Clifford, 'At the Court of Pelesu', in Clifford, *In a Corner of Asia*.

the names of the characters and places are fictional, any keen reader of Clifford's work will immediately recognise that the character of Jack Norris is based on none other than Clifford himself, and Pelesu refers to Pekan, the court of Pahang. The story relates the circumstances and events – the murder and imprisonment of two Chinese merchants who were British subjects[14] – that eventually led to British intervention in Pelesu, and it reads as a parallel account of similar developments which led to British intervention in Pahang.

The narrative begins with a somewhat bleak depiction of life at Pelesu, a remote and forlorn outpost on the eastern coast of the Malayan Peninsula. Clifford describes the place thus:

> The capital city of the Sultan of Pelesu was a somewhat squalid place. It mainly consisted of one long irregular lane running parallel to the river-bank, the houses on one side having a double frontage, abutting respectively on the shore and on the water, while the occupants of those facing them could only gain access to the river by means of a few narrow landing-places; … The street was unmetalled; but the red and dusty earth had been beaten smooth and hard by the passage of innumerable unshod feet; … The mosque, the neglected European bungalow, and the big stone building were alike the property of the King, the two former serving to mark a period of his reign during which, after a short visit of ceremony to a neighbouring British colony, he for a space had devoted to public works some portion of the funds which were more commonly employed in the ministering of his personal pleasures and to the adornment of the constantly changing inmates of his kaleidoscopic harem.[15]

The Sultan of Pelesu, who was at the centre of this tiny and remote universe, is described as a man prone to the excesses of physical pleasure and indulgence, a Malay ruler 'of the old school' surrounded by his numerous

14 Gopinath gives a detailed account of the actual murder and imprisonment of the two Chinese British colonial subjects, events that later served as a pretext for direct British intervention into the affairs of Pahang and which led Sultan Ahmad to conceding to the demands of Hugh Clifford and the colonial authorities. In February 1888 a Chinese merchant by the name of Go Hui was murdered, and Clifford alleged that the Sultan of Pahang was indirectly implicated in the death of the colonial subject. Earlier in January 1888 another Chinese merchant by the name of Su Kim was poisoned, and likewise the cause of his death was laid at the door of the palace of Pahang (Gopinath, *Pahang 1880-1933*, 92-93.)

15 Clifford, 'At the Court of Pelesu', in Clifford, *In a Corner of Asia*, 14-15.

wives 'and their parasitic retinue of hangers-on'.[16] Clifford's portrait of the man is hardly flattering and bordering on the comical:

> For his part, the King resembled the gentlemen whose names sometimes appear in the police reports, inasmuch as, like them, he had no fixed place of abode. The standards of civilisation, represented respectively by the White Man's bungalow and the palace of Chinese design, made no appeal to him; and instead he led a peripatetic existence, dividing his time, as his passing fancy dictated, between the houses occupied by his various concubines. These favoured creatures were accommodated, each with a female retinue of his own, in one or another of half a dozen rather squalid huts abutting on the river.[17]

The main protagonist in the story is the young British colonial officer Jack Norris, who relishes his posting to this 'one-horse kingdom' in the middle of nowhere[18] and who seeks a way to introduce direct British intervention into the state of Pelesu. Clifford notes that Pelesu had been a problem for the British all along and that the colonial officials were keen to introduce some semblance of law and order in the kingdom: 'The state of Pelesu had long been a thorn in the side of the government that presided over the neighbouring crown colony and the adjoining British protectorate; and little by little the evil deeds of the King gathered sufficient weight to turn the slow wheels upon which runs the administration of one of the most ponderous nations of the earth.'[19]

Eventually Jack Norris is given an opportunity to intervene into the affairs of Pelesu/Pahang as a result of a scandal that broke out in the kingdom. A Chinese merchant named Che Ah Ku approaches Norris (whom he calls the 'Pen-awar Puteh',[20] or the 'White Cure', to help him save his wife from the clutches of the lustful Sultan of Pelesu. Ah Ku appeals to Norris for help on the grounds that he is a subject of the Crown Colony of Hong Kong and as such does not have to suffer under Malay law in Pelesu. Norris volunteers to help as he sees this as a pretext to extend British influence in Pelesu, for the sake of coming to the aid of a British colonial subject. As the story develops, numerous intrigues are hatched to deprive Ah Ku of his wife:

16 Ibid., 16.
17 Ibid., 16.
18 Ibid., 19.
19 Ibid., 20.
20 Ibid., 28.

Another Chinese merchant is poisoned, and Ah Ku is eventually ambushed by the sultan's men. Norris defies the will of the sultan and the court of Pelesu by publicly declaring that as soon as the rains are over he will escort Ah Ku and his wife to Singapore, where the British colonial authorities will be alerted about the developments in Pelesu and the attack on a British colonial subject. Tension results and Norris is warned by the sultan and the other chiefs not to proceed, on pain of death. Norris, however, persists in his course of action, only to be disappointed by the death of Ah Ku on the night before their departure to Singapore.[21] Nonetheless, the ambush and death of Ah Ku gives Norris what he wants: a story to tell to the colonial officers in Singapore and the pretext to pressure the Sultan of Pelesu to sign a treaty to allow for the appointment of a permanent British Resident at the court of Pelesu.

Of all the stories that were written by Clifford, 'At the Court of Pelesu' was probably his most sophisticated. Clifford presents Jack Norris as the central character whose narrative voice and authorial presence dominates the story entirely, and which also serves as the moral standard against which all other characters are measured. The Malays in the story are divided into two classes: On the one hand there are the *loyal* Malays of the west coast who have travelled to Pelesu as part of Jack Norris' retinue, led by the fiery Rajah Haji. These 'loyal' Malays are referred to again and again in the story as part of Norris' small band of warriors, and yet they remain undifferentiated save for the fact that they have vowed an oath of loyalty to their British master, and not any Malay king.

Conversely there are the Eastern Malays of Pelesu who come across as a decidedly inferior lot, led by the sultan (who flees the scene of Pelesu lest he be implicated in any violence) and a band of Pelesu nobles who show blind deference to their ruler and their traditions, but hardly any pluck or principles whatsoever. The king's chamberlain, treasurer, et al. are depicted as an obedient but uninspiring lot who have almost no power to resist the will and whim of their ruler, while the ruler himself seems to obey only the dictates of his appetite and pleasures; thus the entire moral economy of Pelesu is condemned to ruin from the outset. (Those familiar with John Crawfurd's depiction of the ruler of Burma and the state of the court of Ava would be able to see interesting parallels in the manner in which native power is presented by both authors.)

Pelesu is repeatedly referred to as 'squalid', 'backward' and isolated 'in a corner of Asia' and the state of moral, economic and political decay in the

21 Ibid., 75.

forlorn land begging for intervention by the 'White Cure' that is, of course, embodied in none other than the form of Jack Norris (i.e. Clifford) himself. What is particularly interesting is how Clifford emphasises the geographical isolation of Pelesu/Pahang in the story and in many of the other stories he writes as well, as if to set up the narrative device of Pahang as the furthest outpost on the Malay Peninsula that remains beyond the redeeming reach of British colonial intervention and colonial law. The juxtapositioning of the 'Western Malays' (who are loyal to Jack Norris) and the 'Eastern Malays' (who are corrupt, base and beholden to their useless ruler) underscores this binary division again and again in the story as well. Despite the difference between the Malays of the west and the east of the peninsula, Clifford's own prognosis of the Malays as a race remains a bleak and negative one. This is further developed in his two-part novel *Saleh: A Prince of Malaya*.[22] In it Clifford presents the predicament faced by colonial officials left with the task of 'educating' the Malays. Saleh, the main character, is a Malay prince whose English education in Britain leaves him uprooted and homeless. He becomes a social outcast amongst his own people and is regarded with contempt by the British colonial officials. In the end, the prince goes *amok* and is killed by his English mentor, Jack Norris (who is based on Clifford himself).

'In the Central Gaol' (1899)[23]

'In the Central Gaol' is one of the more complex and revealing of Clifford's stories, as in it we come to see more of the author's own personal subjective assessments of the Malay people and the role that was meant to be played by the colonial authorities in Pahang and the rest of British Malaya. It begins with the story of Ismail, a young Malay who is sentenced to five years imprisonment for the crime he had committed in a fit of rage. Clifford portrays Ismail as an *'ulu Malay'* (rural Malay) from the countryside whose feeble mind and ignorance leads him to all sorts of trouble, and even then he is unable to comprehend the full weight of the consequences of his actions. After being sentenced to five years jail and hard labour, Ismail is still unable to comprehend the weight of the sentence that has been meted out upon him: 'The White Man had said "five years". What did that mean? Ismail asked himself. Had he said "five years of rice" or "five years of maize"

22 Clifford, *Saleh*. This book originally appeared in two parts, in 1904 and 1908.

23 Clifford, 'In the Central Gaol', in Clifford, *In a Corner of Asia*.

it would have been easier to understand what period of time he had to name. As it was, Ismail was quite in the dark.'[24]

Ismail's sentencing begins with him being sent to the Central Gaol where Clifford describes in some detail the process of turning Ismail into a registered convict with a number rather than a name:

> Ismail was handed over to a Sikh warder; his head was shaved by a deft and businesslike Chinese convict; he was bathed at the well at the centre of the compound; was stripped of his clothes and was presented with a spotless jumper and trousers, blackly marked with broad arrows and the number 307. Ismail had ceased to be, and convict 307 was born into the narrow prison world. In this new capacity many strange things befell him. He was weighed, an operation which filled him with wonder and superstitious fear; he was examined from head to foot, and all his physical characteristics were noted in the vast ledger. And finally he was ushered into the great barred work-shed where he found some sixty or seventy other prisoners standing in a hollow square.[25]

Clifford describes the convicts of the gaol as an assembly of assorted and exotic Asiatics, all of whom were forced to live under a new regime where they were denied their habitual comforts, including betel-nut, tobacco and opium. There in the gaol they were deliberately kept hungry, in order to ensure that they would work productively for their meals:

> They were a peculiarly healthy body of men, very hard and spare, well-fed, well-nurtured but with hardly a pound of superfluous flesh to them all. This is the merit of our prison system in the East. We feed our convicts sufficiently and well, but they rise from every meal feeling the least little bit hungry, and they work day in and day out with the untiring regularity of machines… All this makes for health, and the sheer monotonous regularity of the thing bores the native mind more intensely, and wearies the soul of him more effectually, than any White Man can conceive.[26]

Clifford comments on the gaol system as a something that is infinitely better than the 'barbarous gaol-cages'[27] of the independent Malay kingdoms, and

24 Ibid., 107.
25 Ibid., 108-109.
26 Ibid., 110.
27 Ibid., 110.

he argues that it is the best corrective to the inherently stupid, idle and lazy character of Asians in general.[28] Midway through the narrative Ismail encounters another older Malay prisoner who recounts his own sorry tale of how he ended up in jail. The old man explains to Ismail that he had murdered his own daughter fifteen years before, in a fit of delusional rage when he claimed that he had been possessed. Mistaking his daughter for a *lang-suir* (female ghost), he attacked her, only to discover his mistake later. Again, the character of the old prisoner reinforces Clifford's view that the Malays are a superstitious lot who believe in ghosts and spirit possession. At the end of the story the old man is finally set free when two visiting British justices reviewed his case. Even so, Clifford presents the case of the old man and his imprisonment as the result of native folly rather than the miscarriage of British justice. As the two colonial officials conclude their review of the case, one of them says to the other: 'The murder was an accident, and the conviction a mistake, but native human nature – a thing that we shall never really get a hang of – and not White Man's folly was responsible for the latter as much as for the former.'[29]

The flow of the story is disjointed, not least because the story of Ismail is cut midway and is taken over by the story of the old prisoner. Throughout the story Clifford's depiction of the native prisoners – Malays, Sumatrans, Indians and Chinese – is largely negative, though the character of the Malays comes under particular scrutiny. Both Ismail and the old prisoner are described as shallow, weak, ignorant, superstitious and therefore in need of guidance by more rational and disciplined Europeans. The prison regime of the British that was introduced in Pahang is described as essentially modern, rational and just, creating 'corrected' convicts who can be turned into productive labour both in jail and later when they have been released.

'A Malayan Prison' (1916)[30]

In contrast to 'In the Central Gaol', Clifford's short story 'A Malayan Prison', which was written sixteen years later, recounts his visit to a Malay prison that was run by one of the chieftains of Trengganu,[31] 'a Raja who, though he

28 Ibid., 112.

29 Ibid., 136.

30 Clifford, 'A Malayan Prison', in Clifford, *The Further Side of Silence*.

31 In an address to the Royal Geographical Society which was delivered after he had successfully completed his expedition to Trengganu and Southern Kelantan (1897), Clifford gave a

was not the ruler of the country, was a man of exalted position and stood possessed of considerable power'.[32]

Unlike many of the other stories that he wrote, Clifford's account in 'A Malayan Prison' did not feature a fictional character and its narrative structure is rather shallow. The aim of the story, as Clifford himself attests, was to give an account of the state of Malay prisons that were run by the Malay chiefs and rulers of Trengganu and Pahang, and in this respect its main aim was to draw a sharp contrast between standards of justice and the absence of rule of law in the Malay states and the state of affairs in the colonies run by the British authorities. Clifford himself does not spare the reader the details of life in the Malay prison and notes early on that 'it is not a pretty tale, and I would counsel persons who prefer to ignore the existence of uncomfortable things to give it a wide berth'.[33]

The main character of the story is a Malay man – Talib – who was accused of stealing the *keris* of the rajah, and who was consequently incarcerated in the rajah's personal jail, which was a structure made of wood that resembled a wooden cage raised on wooden planks six inches above the ground. The prison complex was made up of several of these wooden cages, in which the prisoners were forced to live until they were freed at the whim of the rajah. Clifford notes that there were no sanitary standards to speak of, and the prisoners were forced to live, eat, sleep and perform their toilet functions in these cramped cages for months and years on end, and that the cages were never cleaned.[34]

The emphasis of the story lies in the detailed accounts of the wretchedness of the prisoners and their conditions, and the absence of anything that resembles a legal system in the Malay kingdoms:

> As it happened, the fellow was innocent of the theft; but his protestations were not believed, and his master forthwith consigned him to the pen-jara, or local gaol. The tedious formality of a trial played no part in Malayan judicial proceedings, and nothing in the nature of the sifting of evidence was deemed necessary. The stolen dagger was the property of the prince. The suspect was a man of no account. That was enough; and Talib went to gaol accordingly. To European ears this does not sound

similar, if less dramatic, account of the Malay prisons in the states he explored. The account in 'A Malayan Prison' is very similar to the one he later delivered to the society in London.

32 Clifford, 'A Malayan Prison', in Clifford, *The Further Side of Silence*, 136.

33 Ibid., 135.

34 Ibid., 137-140.

> very terrible. Miscarriages of justice are not unknown, even in civilised lands; and in semi-barbarous countries such things are, of course, to be looked upon as all in a day's march.[35]

Clifford uses this incident to illustrate his point about the 'semi-barbarous' nature of the natives, and the theme of Asiatic barbarism and cruelty runs throughout the text. Written much later than the stories that appeared in *A Corner of Asia*, 'A Malayan Prison' was written at a time when Clifford had already assumed the role of governor of Labuan and Resident of Pahang. In it the narrative devices he employs are all aimed at convincing the reader of the necessity of colonial intervention to save the natives from themselves and their semi-barbaric nature, which has allowed such miscarriages of justice to be perpetrated openly and on a regular basis. Clifford ends the tale by recounting his own feeling of helplessness as he was not empowered (then) by his superiors to intervene directly into the affairs of Pahang and the local rulers of the state. He concludes with an argument that under such pressing circumstances colonial intervention was both necessary and good, a rebuff that he offers to liberal critics in the West who opposed further European penetration into native lands and affairs: 'Readers of this true tale will perhaps realise how it comes to pass that some of us men in the outskirts – who have seen things, and not merely heard of them – are apt to become rather strong "imperialists", and find it hard at times to endure with patience the ardent defenders of the Rights of Man, who bleat their comfortable aphorisms in the British House of Commons, and cry shame upon our "hungry acquisitions".'[36]

'A Daughter of the Muhammadans' (1899)[37]

Among the stories of Hugh Clifford one of the few that bears a somewhat positive (if selective) portrayal of the Malays of Pahang is 'A Daughter of the Muhammadans'. It also happens to be one of the stories where Clifford explicitly refers to himself as the main protagonist, as he notes at the end of the story his own personal involvement with the main character of the tale,

35 Ibid., 136-137.

36 Ibid., 147.

37 Clifford, 'A Daughter of the Muhammadans', in Clifford, *In a Corner of Asia*. The story also appears in the edited volume *The Further Side of Silence*, but with the omission of the last section where Clifford relates his last encounter with Minah, long after her husband has passed away.

Minah, a young Malay woman whom he meets during one of his inspection tours of Pahang by river-boat.

Minah appears in the story when Clifford sees her walking slowly by the river, bearing a heavy weight upon her shoulders which turns out to be the sickly body of her leprous husband:

> It was, as I have seen, the shape of a woman, bowed beneath a heavy burden, still young, not ill-looking, and with the truest, most feminine eyes that I think I have ever chanced upon… At the moment my attention was completely absorbed by the strange bundle which she bore. It was a shapeless thing, wrapped in an old cloth, soiled and tattered and horribly stained, which was slung over the woman's left shoulder, across her breast and under her right armpit. Out of the bundle just above the base of the woman's own neck there protruded a head, which lolled backwards as she moved, grey-white in colour, hairless, sightless, featureless, formless, an object of horror and repulsion.[38]

The object that Minah was carrying turns out to be her sick husband who was dying of leprosy. While Clifford was impressed and touched by the sight before him, in his narrative he notes the anger and disgust of the Malays who felt that such a sight ought to be spared from them and their colonial overseer. The Malay Penghulu speaks ill of Minah and accuses her of being stubborn and headstrong because she refused to divorce her sickly husband and leave him to die. Clifford comes to her defence and instead rewards Minah with some silver coins, while publicly commending her altruism and love for her husband.

The rest of the narrative recounts the circumstances of Minah's marriage to her husband and repeats many of the stereotypes and clichés about the East and the ways of Asiatics: Minah is married off without her consent when she was a child and was not given any choice in the matter. Later her husband falls ill and they are unable to have children together, but she dutifully stays by his side and cares for him as his illness ravages his body and leaves him crippled. Malay society is depicted as superstitious, ignorant of medical discoveries, unable to tolerate such things in their midst, which they decry as aberrations or acts of fate. The disease is described by the Malays as something 'evil', unspoken and misunderstood. The tale ends after a short aside when Clifford refers to his posting as governor of the Crown colony of Labuan in 1899 and his subsequent return to Pahang as

38 Ibid., 139-140.

British Resident there. He encounters Minah again, though by then she is married to the brother of her now dead and departed husband, and is the mother of his child. While Clifford extols the virtues of Minah the individual Malay woman[39] and commends her for her steadfast loyalty and devotion to her husband, he admonishes her community for their traditional ways and ignorance of modern developments such as medicine and health care.

'The Wages of Sin' (1899)[40]

'The Wages of Sin' revolves around a dispute between the Malays of a Malay settlement at Bukit Segumpal and a Chinese merchant named Lim Chong, who was falsely accused of murder. The false accusation of Lim Chong by his Malay adversaries serves as the leitmotif against which Clifford attempts to account for ethnic and racial differences between the Malays and Chinese, and it is one of the few stories where Clifford spends considerable time discussing the traits of the Chinese in particular.

By the end of the story Lim Chong is proven to be innocent of the charge of the murder of a Malay woman, but Clifford tries to explain this by providing his own account of the animosity between the Malays and Chinese:

> It was natural enough for a [Malay] warrior to despise the yellow skin, for he prized others according to the amount of fight which they are capable of showing upon occasion, and judged from this standpoint, the Chinamen who, in those days, visited the Peninsula were poor creatures indeed… The opinion as to its utter worthlessness prevailed equally with the Raja, the chief, and the peasant; it was as strong in the villages and the country places as in the town and the palace; and in the estimation of no class of Malays, I verily believe, did the Chinaman rank higher than any beasts that perish. He was an infidel, for one thing; he was a rich man, often enough, and as such a natural prey of prince and chief; he was a skilful and shifty trader, who cheated the peasants out of their halfpence, and he was detested accordingly.[41]

The neat division between the Malays as a *martial* race and the Chinese as a *crafty* race that is found in Clifford's writings echo the same gendered racial

39 Ibid., 162.
40 Clifford, 'The Wages of Sin', in Clifford, *In a Corner of Asia*.
41 Ibid., 183-184.

dichotomies that were used in other parts of the British Empire as part of the process of divide-and-rule. The theme of the wily and unscrupulous Chinese merchant who was despised by the Malays is repeated time and again in the narrative. Later Clifford returns to the theme again: 'He is despised by those around him, but he makes money; he is an outcast, and knows it.'[42]

Clifford portrays the Chinese merchant as a loner and misanthrope who lives like a parasite among Malays and who constantly preys upon them thus:

> In a little space, half of the village is in his debt, and as the folk who owe him money are bound to treat him with civility, he begins to taste the sweets of power. He uses it badly, or course, for he hates all the villages cordially. He has no scruples, no heart, no morality, commercial or private… When the men-folk are in the fields, the women come to the shop and either contract debts which they and their husbands are powerless to meet, or else beg for trifles which sooner or later the shopkeeper makes them pay in very full measure. Thus, presently, half the women-folk of the village will be in the power of the alien.[43]

This jaundiced view of the Chinese *in toto* is brought into focus in the character of Lim Chong, who though innocent of the charge of murder levelled against him proves to be unscrupulous and wily after his release: He demands compensation to the tune of one thousand dollars from the government for having him arrested, and complains of having his wife stolen from him despite the fact that he was never married.[44] Clifford's depiction of Lim Chong as the avaricious Chinese merchant who would stoop to nothing to gain a profit was typical of many Western colonial accounts of Chinese customs and manners then, and was shared among not only British colonial administrators in Malaya but also their Dutch counterparts in the Dutch East Indies: Cast as 'industrious' yet 'non-native', the Chinese of the East Indies were utilised by the Dutch to serve the ends of colonial-capitalism, but hardly ever made to feel part of the society of the East Indies, despite the increasingly large number of Peranakan Chinese who were born and growing up there. In December 1857 the minister of the Dutch East Indies, Pieter Mijer (1856-1858), went as far as to refer to the Chinese entrepreneurs

42 Ibid., 184.
43 Ibid., 185-186.
44 Ibid., 192.

in Java as the *'bloedzuigers der Javanen'*[45] ('Bloodsuckers of the Javanese') and called for limits to be imposed on their economic activities, ostensibly to protect the local Javanese merchant community – while also allowing Dutch entrepreneurs more room to manoeuvre in the colony. Clifford's depiction of the Chinese as solitary, amoral and possessively individualistic was typical of the anti-Chinese attitude that was prevalent among European colonial officials at the time, who regarded their presence as necessary and a means to help expand the sphere of colonial power (through trade and tax-farming) but who nevertheless were inclined to belittle them as parasites upon the native communities when it suited their colonial interests and agenda.

Though Clifford's stories and reports were written during the closing decades of the nineteenth century up to the 1920s – his last novel was completed in 1926 and published in America – they demonstrate a degree of continuity in his choice of themes, tropes and narrative devices; not least in the manner that they configured Pahang and the rest of the Malay Peninsula as an exotic land that was ill-governed and overrun by bandits and malcontents. The reader who is already familiar with the works of Raffles, Crawfurd, Mundy, Keppel and others who wrote earlier would be able to see similar strategies of *Othering* at work, notably in the manner that native communities, belief systems and power structures were unfavourably compared to the Western model that he sought to impose on Pahang and the other kingdoms of the peninsula.

45 'Sedert wanneer is het Gouvernement zoo anti-Chineesch geworden?', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* (1857), part 1, 168-171 (quoted in Lohanda, *Growing Pains*, 23n3).

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MALAYA

The rapid development of Southeast Asia has been accompanied by its own identity politics, which at times expresses itself through forms of self-exoticization, staged authenticity and claims of cultural appropriation. These developments, Farish A. Noor argues in *The Discursive Construction of Southeast Asia in 19th Century Colonial-Capitalist Discourse*, have their roots in the region's failure to come to a critical understanding of how current national and cultural identities in the region came about. To remedy that, Noor offers an account of the construction of Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century by the forces of capitalism and imperialism, to show how the tropes and themes of Southeast Asian identity politics today date back to the era of gunboat epistemology – where knowledge and power went hand-in-hand.

Farish A. Noor is Associate Professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, where he teaches the politics and history of Southeast Asia.

'This is a truly excellent work, both insightful and highly original – a very rare text indeed. It constitutes a major and highly detailed study of the way the idea of "Southeast Asia" emerged as the product of discursive construction during the colonial era. As a result, this book makes a landmark contribution to our understanding of the effects of Orientalist discourse in the region. This is one of the best texts on the region that has appeared for some time, providing a rich and vital tool with which to bring the region into wider conversation with critical theory and postcolonial studies.'
– Professor Rachel Harrison, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

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